ΕΝ ΟΛΙΓΩ ΚΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΟΣ.

THE Almoſt Chriſtian Diſcovered:

OR THE

FALSE PROFESSOR

TRYED and CAST.

Being the Subſtance of Seven

SERMONS

Firſt Preached at *Sepulchers*, *London*, 1661. And now at the Importunity of Friends made Publick.

The Eighth Edition.

By *MATTHEW MEAD.*

Luk. 16. 14. *And the Phariſees who were Covetous, heard all theſe things, and they derided him.*

Verſe 15. *And Jeſus ſaid unto them, Ye are they which juſtifie your ſelves before Men; but God knoweth your Hearts: For that which is highly eſteemed amongſt Men, is Abomination in the ſight of God.*

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To the Congregation at *Sepulchers*, that were the Auditors of theſe Sermons:

Grace and Peace be multiplyed.

Beloved,

WHat the meaning of that Providence was, that called me to the occupation of my Talent amongſt you this Summer, will be beſt read and underſtood by the Effects of it upon your own Souls: The kindly increaſe of Grace and Holineſs in heart and life, can only prove it to have been in mercy: where this is not the fruit of the Word, there it becomes a Judgment. The World travels with life or death, ſalvation or damnation, and bringeth forth one or another in every ſoul that heares it; I would not for a World (were it in my power to make the choice) that my labours, which were meant and deſigned for the promotion of your immortal ſouls, to the glory of the other World, in a preſent purſuance of the things of your peace, ſhould be found to have been a miniſtration of Death and Condemnation in the great day of Jeſus Chriſt. Yet this (the Lord knoweth) is the too common effect of the moſt plain and powerful preaching of the Goſpel. The waters of the Sanctuary Ezek. 47. 11. a. are always heal where they come; for there are miry and mariſh places that ſhall be given to Salt, לְמֶלַח נִתְּנוּ: The ſame word (לְמֶח) is elſewhere in Scripture rendered barrenneſs; he

Psal. 107. 34 turneth a fruitful land למלחה into barrenness, *so that the Judgment denounced upon these miry and marish places, is, that the* curse of barrenness *shall rest upon them, notwithstanding the* waters of the Sanctuary *overflow them.*

It is sad, but certain, that the Gospel inflicteth a death of its own, as well as the Law, or else how are those Trees in Jude *said to be* δὶς ἀποθανόντα, twice dead, and plucked up by the roots ? *Yea, that which in it self is the greatest Mercy, through the interposition of mans lusts, and the efficacy of this cursed sin of unbelief, turneth to the greatest Judgment, as the richest and most generous Wine makes the sharpest Vinegar. Our Lord* Christ *himself, the choicest mercy that the Bowels of a God could bless a perishing world withal; whose coming (himself bearing witness) was no less Errand than that of Eternal Life and Blessedness to the lost and cursed Sons of* Adam : *Yet to how many was he* אבן נגף וצור מכשול, *a stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence; Yea, a gin, and a snare, and that to both the Houses of* Israel, *the only professing people of God at that day in the World ? And is he not a stone of stumbling in the Ministery of the Gospel to many professors to this very day, upon which they fall and are broken ? When he saith,* Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me; *he doth therein plainly suppose, that both in his Person and Doctrine the generality of men would be offended in him.*

Jude 12.

Rom. 5. 8.

Joh. 3. 16.

Joh. 10. 10.

Isa. 2. 14.

Not that this is the design of Christ and the Gospel, but it comes so to pass through the corruptions of the hearts of men, whereby they make light of Christ, and stand out against that Life and Grace which the Lord Jesus by his Blood so dearly purchased, and is by the preaching of the Gospel

so

so freely tendered; the wilful refusal whereof will as surely double our damnation, as the acceptance thereof will secure our eternal Salvation.

Oh consider it is a thing of the most serious concernment in the world, how we carry our selves under the Gospel, and with what dispositions and affections of Heart and Soul seasons of Grace are entertained; this being taken into the consideration to make it weight, that we are the nearer to Heaven or to Hell, to Salvation or Damnation by every Ordinance we sit under: Boast not therefore of priviledges enjoyed, with neglect of the important duties thereby required. Remember Capernaums *case and tremble: As many go to Heaven by the very Gates of Hell, so more go to Hell by the Gates of Heaven, in that the number of them that profess Christ, is greater than the number of them that truly close with Christ.* Mat. 11. 13.

Beloved, I know the Preaching of the Gospel hath proselyted many of you into a Profession; but I fear that but few of you are brought by it to a true close with the Lord Christ for Salvation. (I beseech you bear with my jealousie, for it is the fruit of a tender love to your precious Souls.) Most men are good Christians in the verdict of their opinion; but you know the Law alloweth no man to be a witness in his own case, because their affection usually out-acteth Conscience, and self-love balketh truth for its own interest.

The heart of Man is the greatest Impostor and Cheat in the world; God himself adjusts it, Jer. 17. 9. The heart is deceitful above all things *Some of the deceits thereof you will find discovered in this* Treatise, *which sheweth you, that every Grace hath its counterfeit, and that the highest Profession may be, where true Conversion is not.* הלב מנלעק *Supplantativum cor ira omni.*

The design hereof is not to break the bruised

 Reed,

Reed, nor to quench the ſmoaking Flax: *Not to diſcourage the weakeſt Believer, but to awaken formal Profeſſors. I would not ſad the hearts of any,* whom God would not have made ſad; *though I know it is hard to rip up the dangerous eſtate and condition of a profeſſing Hypocrite, but that the weak Chriſtian will think himſelf concerned in the diſcovery. And therefore as I preached a Sermon on Sincerity among you, for the ſupport and encouragement of ſuch, at the end of this; ſo I did purpeſe to have printed it with this. But who can be Maſter of his own purpoſes, that is, as I am under, ſuch daily variety of Providences! your kindly acceptation of this, will make me a debtor for that.*

The Dedication hereof belongs to you on a double account, for as it had not been preached, but that love to your Souls cauſed it; ſo it had much leſs been printed, but that your importunate deſire procured it; And therefore what entertainment ſoever it findeth in the World, yet I hope I may expect you will welcome it, eſpecially conſidering it was born under your Roof, and therefore hopes to find favour in your Eyes, and room in your Hearts.

Accept it I beſeech you, as a publick acknowledgment of the Engagements which your great, (and I think I may ſay) unparallel'd Reſpects have laid me under, which I can no way compenſate, but by my prayers; and if you will take them for ſatisfaction, I do promiſe to be your Remembrancer at the Throne of Grace, whilſt I am

Matthew Mead.

TO

TO THE READER.

Reader,

I Know how cuſtomary it is for men to aſcend the publick Stage, with premiſed Apologies for the weakneſs and unworthineſs of their Labours, which is an argument that their deſires (either for the ſake of others profit, or their own credit, or both) are ſtretched beyond the tedder of their abilities; and that they covet to commend themſelves to the Worlds cenſure, in a better dreſs than common infirmity will allow; for my own part, I may truly ſay with *Gideon, Behold my thouſand is the meaneſt,* (my Talent is the ſmalleſt) *and I am the leaſt in my Fathers houſe*; and therefore this appearance in publick is not the fruit of my own choice, which would rather have been in ſome other ſubject, wherein I ſtand in ſome ſenſe indebted to the World; or elſe in ſomewhat more digeſted, and poſſibly better fitted for common acceptation; but this is but to conſult the intereſt of a mans own name, which in matters of this concern, is no better than a *ſowing to the fleſh*, and the harveſt of ſuch a Seeds-time will be *in corruption.*

אלפי דלד

Judg. 6. 15.

Gal. 6. 8.

Thou haſt here one of the ſaddeſt conſiderations imaginable preſented to thee, and

that is, How far it is possible a man may go in a Profession of Religion, and yet after all
1 Cor. 9. 24. fall short of Salvation; How far he may run, and yet not *so run as to obtain*; this, I say, is sad, but not so sad as true; for our Lord
Luk. 13. 24. Christ doth plainly attest it; *strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

My design herein is, that the formal sleepy Professor may be awakened, and the close Hypocrite discovered; but my fear is, that weak Believers may be hereby discouraged; for as it is hard to shew how low a Child of God may fall into sin, and yet have true grace, but that the sinner will be apt thereupon to presume; so it is as hard to shew how high an Hypocrite may rise in a Profession, and yet have no grace, but that the Believer will be apt thereupon to despond. The prevention whereof I have carefully endeavoured, by shewing, that though a man may go thus far, and yet be but *almost a Christian*; yet a man may fall short of this, and be a true *Christian* notwithstanding; judge not therefore thy state by any one *Character* thou findest laid down of a False Professor, but read the whole, and then make a judg-
Mat. 17. 26. ment: For I have cared, as not to *give Childrens bread to Dogs*, so not to use the *Dogs whip* to scare the *Children*; yet I could wish, that this *Book* might fall into the hands of such only whom it chiefly concerns, who
Rev. 3. 1. *have a name to live, and yet are dead*; being
2 Tim. 3. 5. busie with the *form of Godliness*, but strangers to the *power of it*. These are the proper subjects of this Treatise: And the Lord follow

it

it with his bleſſing where ever it comes, that it may be an awak ning word to all ſuch, and eſpecially to that generation of profligate profeſſors (with which this age abounds) who, if they keep to their Church, bow the knee, talk out a few prayers, and at a good time receive the *Sacrament*, think they do enough for Heaven, and hereupon judge their condition ſafe, and their Salvation ſure; though there be a Hell of ſin in their Hearts, *and the poyſon of Aſps is under their lips*, their minds being as yet carnal and unconverted, and their Converſations filthy and unſanctified: If Eternal life be of ſo eaſie attainment, and to be had at ſo cheap a rate, why did our *Lord Chriſt* tell us, *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*. And why ſhould the Apoſtle perplex us with ſuch a needleſs injunction, *To give diligence to make our calling and election ſure?* certainly therefore it is no ſuch eaſie thing to be ſaved, as many make it; and that thou wilt ſee plainly in the following Diſcourſe: I have been ſomewhat ſhort in the application of it; and therefore let me here be thy Remembrancer in five important duties. Rom. 3. 13. Mat. 7. 14. 2 Pet. 1. 10.

Firſt, *Take heed of reſting in a form of Godlineſs*, as if Duties *ex opere operato* could confer grace; a lifeleſs formality is advanced to a very high eſteem in the world, as a *Kab of Doves dung* was ſold in the Famine of *Samaria* at a very dear rate. Alas! the profeſſion of Godlineſs is but a ſandy foundation to build the hope of an immortal Soul upon for Eternity; remember the Lord Jeſus Chriſt called 2 Kings 6. 25.

Mat. 7. 26. him a fooliſh builder, *that founded his houſe upon the ſand*, and the ſad event proved him
Verſe 27. ſo, *for it fell, and great was the fall of it*; Oh therefore lay thy foundation by Faith upon
1 Cor. 3. 12. the Rock Chriſt Jeſus; look to Chriſt through all, and reſt upon Chriſt in all.

Secondly, *Labour to ſee an excellency in the power of Godlineſs*, a Beauty in the life of Chriſt; If the means of grace have a lovelineſs in them; ſurely grace it ſelf hath much more; for *finis dat amabilitatem mediis*, the goodneſs of the means lies in its ſuitableneſs and ſerviceableneſs to the end; the form of godlineſs hath no goodneſs in it, any farther than it ſteads and becomes uſeful to the Soul in the power and practice of Godlineſs. The life of Holineſs is the only excellent life, it is the life of Saints and Angels in Heaven; yea, it is the life of God in himſelf. As it is a great proof of the baſeneſs and filthineſs of ſin, that ſinners ſeek to cover it; ſo it is a great proof of the excellency of godlineſs, that ſo many pretend to it: The very Hypocrites fair profeſſion pleads the cauſe of Religion, although the Hypocrite is then really worſt, when he is ſeemingly beſt.

Malus ad hoc bonum ſe ſimulat, nunc eſt pe ſimus.

Thirdly, *Look upon things to come as the greateſt realities*; for *non entis & non apparentis idem eſt affectus*; things that are not believed, work no more upon the affections, than if they had no being; and this is the grand reaſon why the generality of men ſuffer their affections to lacquy after the world, ſetting the Creature in the place of God in their hearts.

Moſt

Moſt men judge of the reality of things by their viſibility and proximity to Senſe; and therefore the choice of that wretched Cardinal becomes their Option, who would not leave his part in *Paris*, for his part in *Paradiſe*: ſure whatever his intereſt might be in the former, he had little enough in the latter: Well may covetouſneſs be called Idolatry, when it thus chooſes the World for its God. Col. 3. 5.

Oh! conſider, Eternity is no Dream; Hell and the Worm that never dies, is no melancholy conceit. Heaven is no feigned *Elyſium*: There is the greateſt reality imaginable in theſe things; though they are ſpiritual, and out of the ken of ſenſe, yet they are real, and within the view of faith! *Look not therefore at the things which are ſeen, but look at the things which are not ſeen; for the things that are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen, are eternal.* Mar. 9. 44. 2 Cor. 4. 18.

Fourthly, *Set a high rate upon thy Soul*; what we lightly prize, we eaſily part with; many men ſell their Souls (at the rate of prophane *Eſaus* birth-right) *for a morſel of bread*, nay *for that which* in the ſenſe of the Holy Ghoſt *is not bread*. O conſider, thy Soul is the moſt precious and invaluable Jewel in the world, it is στοᾶ τέκτονος καλὸν πανοπλίας, the moſt beautiful piece of Gods workmanſhip in the whole Creation; it is that which bears the Image of God, and which was bought with the blood of the Son of God, and ſhall we not ſet a value upon it, and count it precious. Heb. 12. 16. Iſa. 55. 2. 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19.

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The Apoſtle *Peter* ſpeaks of three very precious things.

2 Pet. 1. 7.
2 Pet. 1. 4.
and 1. 1.

A Precious Chriſt,
Precious Promiſes,
And Precious Faith.

Now the *preciouſneſs* of all theſe lies in their uſefulneſs to the Soul. Chriſt is *precious*, as being the Redeemer of precious Souls: the Promiſes are *precious*, as making over this *precious Chriſt* to *precious Souls*. *Faith is precious*, as bringing a *precious Soul* to cloſe with a *precious Chriſt*, as he is held forth in the *precious Promiſes*. Oh take heed that thou art not found *over-valuing* other things, and *undervaluing* thy Soul. Shall thy fleſh, nay, thy Beaſt be loved, and ſhall thy Soul be ſlighted? Wilt thou cloath and pamper thy Body, and yet take no care of thy Soul? this is as if a man ſhould feed his Dog, and
1 Cor. 6. 13. ſtarve his Child? *Meats for the belly, and the belly for Meats, but God ſhall deſtroy both it and them.* Oh let not a tottering periſhing carkais have all your time and care, as if the Life and Salvation of thy Soul were not worth the while.

Laſtly, *Meditate much of the ſtrictneſs and ſuddenneſs of that Judgment-day, which thou and I muſt paſs through into an everlaſting ſtate*, wherein God the impartial Judge will require an account at our hands, of all our Talents and Betruſtments; we muſt then account for Time, how we have ſpent that; for Eſtate, how we have imployed that; for Strength, how we have laid out that;

for

for Afflictions and Mercies, how they have been improved; for the Relations we ſtood in here, how they have been diſcharged; and for ſeaſons and means of Grace, how they have been huſbanded; and look how *we have ſowed here, we ſhall reap hereafter.* Gal. 6. 7.

Reader, Theſe are things that of all other deſerve moſt of, and call loudeſt for our utmoſt care and endeavour, though by the moſt leaſt minded: To conſider what a ſpirit of Atheiſm (if we may judge the tree by the fruits, and the Principle by the practice) the hearts of moſt men are filled with, who live, as if God were not to be ſerved, nor Chriſt to be ſought, nor luſt to be mortified, nor ſelf to be denyed, nor the Scripture to be believed, nor the Judgment-day to be minded, nor Hell to be feared, nor Heaven to be deſired, nor the Soul to be valued; but give up themſelves to a worſe than bruiſh ſenſuality, *to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs*, living without God in the World: This is a meditation fit enough to break our hearts, if at leaſt we were of holy *Davids* temper, who *beheld the tranſgreſſors and was grieved*, and had *Rivers of waters running down his eyes, becauſe men kept not Gods Laws.* The prevention and correction of this Soul-deſtroying Diſtemper, is not the leaſt deſign of this Treatiſe now put into thy hand: though the chief virtue of this Receit lies in its Soveraign uſe to aſſwage and cure the ſwelling Tympany of Hypocriſie; yet it may ſerve alſo (with Gods Bleſſing) as a Plaiſter for the Plague-ſore of Prophaneneſs, if timely applyed by ſerious Meditation, and carefully

Mat. 7. 19, 20.

Eph. 4. 19. & 2. 12.

Pſal. 119. 158. Verſe 136.

fully kept on by conſtant Prayer.

Reader, Expect nothing of curioſity or quaintneſs, for then I ſhall deceive thee; but if thou wouldſt have a *touch-ſtone* for the trial of thy ſtate, poſſibly this may ſtead thee. If thou art either a ſtranger to a profeſſion, or an Hypocrite under a profeſſion, then read and tremble, for thou art the man here pointed at.

Horat. —— *Mutato nomine de te*
Fabula narratur.——

Mark 9. 1. Luk. 17. 21. But if the Kingdom of God be come with power into thy Soul; if Chriſt be formed in thee; if thy heart be upright and ſincere with God, then read and rejoyce.

Iſa. 48. 17. I fear I have tranſgreſſed the bounds of an Epiſtle; the Mighty God, whoſe Prerogative it is to teach to profit, whether by the tongue, or the pen, by ſpeaking, or writing, bleſs this Tract, that it may be to thee as a Cloud of Rain to the dry ground, dropping fatneſs to thy Soul, that ſo thy Fleece being watered with the *dew of Heaven*, thou 2 Pet. 3. 18. mayeſt *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt.* In whom I am thy

Friend and Servant,

London Octob. 29. 1661.

Mat. Mead.

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ACTS

ACTS XXVI. 28.

—Ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις χριστιανὸν ποιῆσαι.

——*Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.*

IN this Chapter you have the Apoſtle *Paul's* Apology, and defenſative Plea, which he makes for himſelf againſt thoſe blind *Jews* which did ſo maliciouſly proſecute him before *Agrippa*, *Feſtus*, *Bernice*, and the Council.

In which Plea he doth chiefly inſiſt upon three things:

The manner of his Life before Converſion.

The manner of his Converſion.

The manner of his Life after Converſion.

How he lived before Converſion, he tells you from *verſe* 4. to 13.

How God wrought on him to Converſion, he tells you from *verſe* 13. to 18.

How he lived after Converſion, he tells you from *verſe* 19. to 23.

Before Converſion he was very Phariſaical.

The

The manner of his conversion was very wonderful.

The fruit of his conversion was very remarkable.

Before conversion he persecuted the Gospel which others preached: after conversion he preached the Gospel which himself had persecuted.

While he was a Persecutor of the Gospel, the *Jews* loved him; but now that (by the Grace of God) he was become a Preacher
Verse 21. of the Gospel, now the *Jews* hate him, and sought to kill him.

He was once against Christ, and then many were for him; but now that he was for Christ, all were against him; his being an
Verse 9. enemy to Jesus, made others his friends; but when he came to own Jesus, then they became his enemies.

And this was the great charge they had against him, that of a great Oppoler, he was become a great Professor.

Hic vir invidit mihi gratiam Christi. Because God hath changed him, therefore this enraged them: As if they would be the worse, because God had made him better. God had wrought on him by Grace, and they seem to envy him the Grace of God.

He preached no Treason, nor sowed no Sedition; only he preached Repentance, and Faith in Christ, and the Resurrection, and for this he was called in question.

This is the Breviate and Sum of *Pauls* defence and plea for himself, which you find in the sequel of the Chapter had a different effect upon his Judges.

Festus seems to censure him, ver. 24.

Agrippa,

Agrippa ſeems to be convinced by him, *vtr.* 28.

The whole Bench ſeems to acquit him, *vtr.* 30, 31.

Feſtus he thinks *Paul* was beſide himſelf.

Agrippa he is almoſt perſwaded to be ſuch a one as himſelf.

Feſtus thinks him mad, becauſe he did not underſtand the Doctrine of Chriſt, and the Reſurrection: *Much Learning hath made thee mad.* *Del ſapientia mundo eſt inſania.* Malc. in loc.

Agrippa he is ſo affected with his Plea, that he is almoſt wrought into his Principle: *Paul* pleads ſo effectually for his Religion, that *Agrippa* ſeems to be upon the turning-point to his Profeſſion. *Putat hominem eſſe fanaticum.* Mer. in loc.

Then Agrippa *ſaid to* Paul, *Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.*

Almoſt] ἐν ὀλίγῳ, ſo the Greek, the words make ſome debate among the Learned. I ſhall not trouble you with the various hints upon them by *Valla*, *Simplicius*, *Beza*, *Eraſmus*, and others. I take the words as we read them, and they ſhew what an efficacy *Paul*'s Doctrine had upon *Agrippa*'s Conſcience. Though he would not be Converted, yet he could not but be convinced; his Conſcience was touched, though his Heart was not renewed.

There is that in Religion, which carries its own evidence along with it, even to the Conſcience of ungodly men? Obſervat.

Thou perſwadeſt me] πείθεις, the word is from the Hebrew פתה, and it ſignifies both *ſuadere* and *perſuadere*, either to uſe arguments to prevail, or to prevail by the arguments uſed. *Suadere eſt conantis, perſuadere eſt efficientis.* Beza.

Suadet qui conſulit, perſuadet, qui quo vult, inducit hominem, Eraſ.

Now it is to be taken in the latter ſenſe here, to ſhew the influence of *Sauls* argument upon *Agrippa*, which had almoſt proſelyted him to the profeſſion of Chriſtianity.

Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.

A Chriſtian] χριστιανὸν γενέσθαι.

I hope I need not tell you what a Chriſtian is, though I am perſwaded many that are called *Chriſtians*, do not know what a Chriſtian is, or if they do, yet they don't know what it is to be a Chriſtian.

A Chriſtian is a Diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt; one that believes in, and follows Chriſt. As one that embraces the Doctrine of *Arminius*, is called an *Arminian*; and as he that owns the Doctrine and way of *Luther*, is called a *Lutheran*; ſo he that embraces, and owns, and follows the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, he is called a Chriſtian.

The Word is taken more largely, and more ſtrictly; more largely, and ſo all that profeſs Chriſt come in the fleſh, are called Chriſtians, in oppoſition to *Heathens* that do not know Chriſt; and to the poor blind *Jews*, that will not own Chriſt; and to the *Mahometan*, that prefers *Mahomet* above Chriſt.

But now in Scripture, the word is of a more ſtrict and narrow acceptation, it is uſed only to denominate the true Diſciples and followers of Chriſt, *Acts* 11. 26. *The Diſciples were firſt called Chriſtians at* Antioch, 1 *Pet.* 4. 16. *If any man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed*, that is, as a Member, and Diſciple of Chriſt, and ſo in

in the Text, *Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.*

The word is uſed but in theſe three places (as I find) in all the New Teſtament, and in each of them it ſignifies in the ſenſe aforementioned.

The *Italians* make the name to be a name of reproach among them, and do uſually abuſe the word Chriſtian to ſignifie a fool. Fulk. *Not. in Rhem. Teſt.*

But if, as the Apoſtle ſaith, *the Preaching of Chriſt* is to the World *fooliſhneſs*, then it is no wonder that the Diſciples of Chriſt are to the world *fools*. 1 Cor. 1.18.

Yet it is true (in a ſound ſenſe) that ſo they are. For the whole of Godlineſs is a Myſtery. 1 Tim. 3.16.

A man muſt *die*, that would *live*; he muſt be *empty*, that would be *full*; he muſt be *loſt*, that would be *found*; he muſt *have nothing*, that would *have all things*; he muſt be *blind* that would have *Illumination*; he muſt be *condemned* that would have *Redemption*; ſo he muſt be a *Fool* that would be a *Chriſtian*. *If any Man among you ſeems to be wiſe, let him become a Fool, that he may be wiſe.* 1 Cor. 4.10.

He is the true Chriſtian, that is the Worlds Fool, but wiſe to Salvation.

Thus you have the ſenſe and meaning of the Words briefly explained.

The Text needs no diviſion, and yet it is pity the *almoſt* ſhould not be divided from the *Chriſtian*.

Though it is of little avail to divide them as they are linked in the Text, unleſs I could divide them as they are united in your Hearts; this would be a bleſſed diviſion, if

the *almost* might be taken from the *Christian*: That so you may not be only ἐν ὀλίγῳ but ἐν πολλῷ, not only *propemodum*, but *admodum*, not only *almost*, but altogether *Christians*.

This is God's work to effect it; but it is our Duty to perswade to it, and O that God would help me to manage this Subject so, that you may say in the conclusion, Thou perswadest me (not almost, but) altogether to be a Christian.

The Observation that I shall propound to handle, is this:

Doct. *There are very many in the World, that are almost, and yet but almost Christians; many that are near Heaven, and yet are ne're the near; many that are within a little of Salvation, and yet shall never enjoy the least Salvation; they are within sight of Heaven, and yet shall never have a sight of God.*

There are two sad expressions in Scripture, which I cannot but take notice of in this place.

The one is concerning the truly Righteous,

The other is concerning the seemingly Righteteous.

It is said of the truly righteous, He shall *scarcely be saved*; and it is said of the seemingly righteous, He shall be *almost saved*: *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.* Mark 12. 24.

Μόλις σώζεται, 1 Pet. 4. 18. The Righteons shall be saved with a *scarcely*, that is, through much difficulty; he shall go to Heaven through many sad fears of Hell.

Quod vix fit fit; quod fere fit, non fit. The Hypocrite shall be saved with an *almost*; that is, he shall go to Hell through many fair hopes of Heaven.

There

There are two things ariſe from hence of very ſerious Meditation.

The one is, how oft a Believer may miſcarry, how low he may fall, and yet have true Grace.

The other is, how far an Hypocrite may go in the way to *Heaven*, how *high* he may attain, and yet have no Grace.

The Saint may be caſt down very near to Hell, and yet ſhall never come there; and the Hypocrite may be lifted up very near to Heaven, and yet never come there.

The Saint may almoſt periſh, and yet be ſaved eternally; the Hypocrite may almoſt be ſaved, and yet periſh finally.

For the Saint at worſt is really a Believer, and the Hypocrite at beſt is really a Sinner.

Before I handle the *Doctrine*, I muſt premiſe three things, which are of great uſe for the eſtabliſhing of weak Believers, that they may not be ſhaken and diſcouraged by this Doctrine.

Firſt, There is nothing in the Doctrine that ſhould be matter of ſtumbling or diſcouragement to weak Chriſtians.

The Goſpel doth not ſpeak theſe things to wound Believers; but to awaken Sinners and formal Profeſſors.

As there are none more averſe than weak Believers, to apply the Promiſes and Comforts of the Goſpel to themſelves, for whom they are properly deſigned: So there are none more ready than they to apply the threats and ſevereſt things of the Word to themſelves, for whom they were never intended.

As the Disciples, when Christ told them,
Mat. 26. 16. *One of you shall betray me,* they that were innocent suspected themselves most, and therefore cry out, *Master is it I?*

So weak Christians when they hear Sinners reproved, or the Hypocrite laid open in the Ministry of the Word, they presently cry out, *Is it I?*

It is the Hypocrites fault to sit under the tryals and discoveries of the Word, and yet not to mind them:

And it it the weak Christians fault to draw sad conclusions of their own state from premises which nothing concern them.

There is indeed great use of such Doctrine as this is, to all Believers.

1. To make them look to their standing, upon what bottom they are, and to see
Mat. 7. 24, 26. that the foundation of their hope be well laid, that they build not upon the Sand, but upon a Rock.

2. It helps to raise our admiration of the distinguishing love of God, in bringing us into the way everlasting, when so many
Psal. 139. 24. perish from the way; and in over-powring our Souls into a true conversion, when so many take up with a graceless profession.

1 Cor. 13. 5. 3. It incites to that excellent duty of heart-searching, that so we approve our selves to God in sincerity.

4. It engages the Soul in double diligence, that it may be found not only believing, but persevering in Faith to the end.

These duties (and such as these are) make this Doctrine of use to all Believers; but they ought not to make use of it as a stumbling-block in the way of their peace and comfort,

My

My deſign in Preaching on this Subject, is not to make ſad the Souls of thoſe whom Chriſt will not have made ſad; I would bring water, not to to *quench the Flax that is ſmoaking*, but to put out that falſe fire that is of the Sinners *own kindling*, leſt walking all his days by the light thereof, he ſhall at laſt *lye down in ſorrow*. Mat. 12. 20. Iſa. 50. 1.

My aim is to level the Mountain of the ſinners Confidence, not to weaken the hand of the Believers Faith and dependance; to awaken and bring in ſecure formal ſinners, not to diſcourage weak Believers.

Secondly, I would premiſe this; though many may go far (very far) in the way to Heaven, and yet fall ſhort; yet that ſoul that hath the leaſt true grace, ſhall never fall ſhort. *The Righteous ſhall hold on his way.* Job. 7. 9.

Though ſome may do very much in a way of duty (as I ſhall ſhow hereafter) and yet miſcarry; yet that ſoul that doth duty with the leaſt ſincerity, ſhall never miſcarry. *For he ſaveth the upright in heart.* Pſal. 7. 10.

The leaſt meaſure of true Grace is as ſaving as the greateſt; it ſaves as ſurely, though not ſo comfortably. The leaſt Grace gives a full Intereſt in the Blood of Chriſt, whereby we are throughly purged; and it gives a full Intereſt in the ſtrength and power of Chriſt, whereby we ſhall be certainly preſerved.

Chriſt keeps Faith in the ſoul, and Faith keeps the ſoul in Chriſt; and ſo *we are kept by the Power of God, through Faith to Salvation.* 1 Pet. 1. 5.

Thirdly, I would premiſe this, They that can hear ſuch truths as this, without ſeri-

ous reflection, and ſelf-examination, I muſt ſuſpect the goodneſs of their condition.

You'l ſuſpect that man to be next door to a Bankrupt, that never caſts up his ſhop, nor looks over his Books; and I as verily think that man an Hypocrite, that never ſearches nor deals with his own Heart.

He that goes on in a road of Duties without any rub or doubting of his ſtate, I doubt no man's State more than his.

When we ſee a man ſick, and yet not ſenſible, we conclude the tokens of Death are upon him.

So when Sinners have no ſenſe of their ſpiritual condition, it is plain that they are dead in ſin; the tokens of Eternal Death are upon them.

Theſe things being premiſed (which I deſire you would carry along in your mind, while we travel through this Subject) I come to ſpeak to the Propoſition more diſtinctly and cloſely.

Doct. *That there are very many in the World that are almoſt, and yet but almoſt Chriſtians.*

I ſhall demonſtrate the truth of the Propoſition, and then proceed to a more diſtinct Proſecution.

1. I ſhall demonſtrate the truth of the Propoſition; and I ſhall do it by Scripture-evidence, which ſpeaks plain, and fully to the caſe.

1. The young man in the Goſpel is an eminent proof of this Truth, in *Mat.* 19. 16, to 23. There you read of one that came to Chriſt to learn of him the way to Heaven; *Good Maſter, what good thing ſhall I do, that I may have Eternal Life?*

Verſe 16.

Our

Our Lord Chriſt tells him, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments*; and when Chriſt tells him which, he anſwers, *Lord, all theſe have I kept from my youth up*; *what lack I yet?* Verſe 17. Ver. 20.

Now do but ſee how far this man went.

1. *He obeyed.*] He did not only hear the Commands of God, but he kept them; now the Scripture ſaith, *Bleſſed is he that hears the word of* God, *and keeps it.* Luke 11 8.

2. *He obeyed univerſally*;] not this or that command, but both this, and that; he did not halve it with God, or pick and chuſe which were eaſieſt to be done, and leave the reſt: No, but he obeys all; *All theſe things have I kept.*

3. *He obeyed conſtantly*; not in a fit of zeal only, but in a continued Series of Duty; his goodneſs was not (as *Ephraim*'s) *like the morning dew that paſſes away*; no; *All theſe things have I kept from my youth up.* Hoſ. 6. 4.

4. *He profeſſeth his deſire to know and do more,*] *to perfect that which was lacking of his obedience*; and therefore he goes to Chriſt to inſtruct him in his Duty; *Maſter, what lack I yet?* Now would you not think this a good man? alas! how few go thus far?

And yet as far as he went, he went not far enough; *he was almoſt, and yet but almoſt a Chriſtian*; for he was an unſound Hypocrite; he forſakes Chriſt at laſt, and cleaves to his Luſt. Ver. 21.

This then is a full proof of the truth of the Doctrine.

A ſecond proof of it, is that of the Parable of the Virgins, *Mat.* 25. 1. and ſo on.

See what a progreſs they make, how far they go in a Profeſſion of Chriſt.

Pſa. 45. 11.

1. *They are called Virgins*] Now this is a Name given in the Scripture, both in the Old Teſtament and the New, to the Saints of Chriſt, *Cant.* 1. 3. *The Virgins love thee:* So *Rev.* 14. 4. The one hundred, forty and four thouſand that ſtood with the Lamb on Mount *Sion*, are called *Virgins.* They are called *Virgins*, becauſe they are not defiled with the *corruptions that are in the world through luſt.*

2 Cor. 11. 2, 3.

2 Pet. 1. 4.

Mat. 25. 1. Now theſe here ſeem to be of that ſort, for they are called *Virgins.*

Verſe 3 2. *They take their Lamps*] That is, they make a Profeſſion of Chriſt.

3. *They had ſome kind of Oyl in their Lamps*] as appears, *ver.* 8. they had ſome Convictions, and ſome Faith; (though not the Faith of Gods Elect) to keep their Profeſſion alive, to keep the Lamp burning.

Hi ſunt non qualeſcunque animæ, ſed tales quæ habet Catholicam fidem, & habere videntur bona opera in Eccleſia Dei. Aug. de Ser. Dom. Ser. 13.

4. *They went*;] Their Profeſſion was not an idle Profeſſion, they did perform Duties, frequent Ordinances, and do many things Commanded; they make a Progreſs, *They went.*

5. *They went forth.*] They went, and outwent, they left many behind them; this ſpeaks out their ſeparation from the World.

Verſe 1. Cant. 1. 7. 6. *They went with the wiſe Virgins.*] They joyned themſelves to thoſe who had joyned themſelves to the Lord, and were Companions of them that were the companions of Chriſt.

7. *They go forth to meet the Bridegroom.*] This ſpeaks out their owning and ſeeking after Chriſt.

8. When

8. When they heard the cry of the Bridegroom coming, *They aroſe and trimmed their Lamps*; they Profeſs Chriſt more highly, hoping now to go in with the Bridegroom. Verſe 7.

9. *They ſought for true Grace.*] Now don't we ſay, the deſires of Grace are Grace? and ſo they are, if true and timely, if ſound and ſeaſonable.

Why lo here a deſire of Grace in theſe Virgins, *give us of your Oyl.*

It was a deſire of true Grace, but it was not a true deſire of Grace; it was not true, becauſe not timely; unſound, as being unſeaſonable; it was too late.

Their folly was in not taking Oyl, when they took their Lamps; their time of ſeeking Grace was when they came to Chriſt, it was too late to ſeek it when Chriſt came to them. They ſhould have ſought for that when they took up their Profeſſion; it was too late to ſeek it at the coming of the Bridegroom. Verſe 8.

And therefore *they were ſhut out*; and though they cry for entrance, *Lord, Lord, open to us*; yet the Lord Chriſt tells them, *I know you not.* Verſe 10. Verſe 11. Verſe 12.

You ſee how far theſe Virgins go in a Profeſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, and how long they continue in it, even 'till the Bridegroom came; they go to the very doors of Heaven, and there (like the *Sodomites*) periſh with their hands upon the very threſhold of Glory.

They were *almoſt Chriſtians*, and yet but *almoſt*; almoſt ſaved, and yet periſh.

You that are Profeſſors of the Goſpel of Chriſt, ſtand and tremble, if they that have

have gone beyond us, fall short of Heaven, what shall become of us, that fall short of them?

If they that are Virgins, that profess Christ, that have some Faith in their Profession, (such as it is) that have some fruit in their Faith, that out-strip others, that seek Christ, that improve their Profession, and suit themselves to their Profession, nay, that seek Grace; if such as these be but *almost Christians*, Lord, what are we?

If these two Witnesses be not sufficient to prove the truth, and confirm the credit of the Proposition,

Take a third; and that shall be from the Old Testament, *Isai.* 58. 2. See what God saith of that People; he gives them a very high Character for a choice People, one would think.

They seek me daily, they delight to know my ways, as a Nation that did Righteousness, and forsook not the Ordinance of their God; *they ask of me the Ordinances of Justice; they take delight in approaching to* God.

See how far these went; if God had not said they were rotten and unsound, we should have took them for the *He-goats before the Flock*, and ranked them among the Worthies. Pray observe;

Jer. 50. 8.

1. *They seek* God.] Now this is the proper Character of a true Saint, to seek God. True Saints are called Seekers of God: *This is the Generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob*, or, O God of *Jacob*.

Psal. 24. 6.

Lo, here a Generation of them that seek God, and are not these the Saints of God? nay further,

2. *They*

2. *They seek him daily.*] Here's diligence backed with continuance, יום יום *day by day*, that is, every day, from day to day. They did not seek him by fits and girds, nor in a time of trouble and affliction only, as many do.

Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a Prayer when thy chastening was upon them, Isai. 26. 16. Many, when God visits them, then they visit him, but not till then; when God poureth out his afflictions, then they pour out their Supplications. This is Sea-mens Devotion; when the storms have brought them to *their wits end, then* John 1. 5. *they cry to the Lord in their trouble*, Psal. 107. 27, 28. Many never cry to God, till they are at their wits end; they never come to God for help, so long as they can help themselves.

But now these here, whom God speaks of, are more zealous in their *Devotion*; the others make a virtue of necessity, but these seem to make conscience of Duty; for, saith God, *They seek me daily.*

Sure this is (one would think) a note of Sincerity.

Job saith of the Hypocrite, *Will he always* Job. 27. 10. *call upon God?* Surely no; but now this people call upon God alwayes, *They seek him daily:* certainly these are no Hypocrites.

3. Saith God, *They delight to know my wayes.* Sure this frees them from the suspicion of Hypocrisie; for *Job* 21. 14. *They say unto* God, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy wayes.*

4. They are *as a Nation that did Righteousness.*] Not only as a Nation that spake Righteousness,

teouſneſs, or knew Righteouſneſs, or profeſſed Righteouſneſs, but as a Nation that did Righteouſneſs, that practiſed nothing but what was juſt and right. They appeared to the Judgment of the World as good as the beſt.

5. *They forſook not the Ordinances of their God.*] They ſeem true to their Principles, conſtant to their Profeſſion, better than many among us, that caſt off Duties; and forſake the Ordinances of God; but theſe hold out in their Profeſſion, *They forſook not the Ordinances of God.*

6. *They ask of me* (ſaith God) *the Ordinances of Juſtice.*] They will not make their own will the Rule of right and wrong, but the Law and Will of God; and therefore in all their dealings with men, they deſire to be guided and counſelled by God. *They ask of me the Ordinances of Juſtice.*

7. *They take delight in approaching to God.*] Sure this can't be the guize of an Hypocrite; Job 27. 10. *Will he delight himſelf in the Almighty?* (ſaith *Job*) No, he will not.

Though God is the chief delight of man, (having every thing in him to render him lovely, as was ſaid of *Titus Veſpatian*) yet the Hypocrite will not delight in God.

Delicia humani generis.

'Till the Affections are made ſpiritual, there is no affection to things that are ſpiritual. God is a ſpiritual good, and therefore Hypocrites cannot delight in God. But theſe are a People that delight in approaching to God.

Hypocritaneque deum neque divina habet in deliciis.

8. They were a People that were much in faſting, as you may ſee, *ver.* 3. *Wherefore have we faſted* (ſay they) *and thou ſeeſt not?*

Now

Now this is a Duty that doth not ſuppoſe and require truth of Grace only in the Heart, but ſtrength of Grace.

No man (ſaith our Lord Chriſt) *puts new Wine into old Bottles, leſt the Bottles break, and the Wine run out.* Mat. 19. 17.

New Wine is ſtrong, and old Bottles weak; and the ſtrong Wine breaks the weak Veſſel: this is a reaſon Chriſt gives, why his Diſciples who were newly converted (and but weak as yet) were not exerciſed with this auſtere diſcipline.

But this people here mentioned, were a people that *faſted* often, *afflicted their ſouls* much, wore themſelves out by frequent Practices of Humiliation. *Aſſemb. Annot.* upon the place.

Sure therefore this was *new Wine in new Bottles*; this muſt needs be a *people* ſtrong in Grace; here ſeems to be Grace, not only in truth, but alſo in growth. And yet for all this they were no better than a Generation of Hypocrites; they made a goodly Progreſs, and went far, but yet they went not far enough; they were caſt off by God after all. I hope by this time the truth of the Point is ſufficiently avouched and confirmed; *That a man may be* (yea very many are) *almoſt, and yet* (no more than) *but almoſt Chriſtians.*

Now for the more diſtinct Proſecution of the Point,

1. *I ſhall ſhew you ſtep by ſtep, how far a man may go, what attainments he may reach unto, how ſpecious and ſingular a Progreſs he may make in Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian when all is done.*

2. *I will ſhew you whence it is, that many men go ſo far as that they are almoſt Chriſtians.*

3. *Why they are but almoſt Chriſtians when they have gone thus far.*

4. *What the reaſon is, why men that go thus far as to be almoſt Chriſtians, yet go no farther than to be almoſt Chriſtians.*

Queſt. 1. *How far may a man go in the way to Heaven, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian?*

Anſw. This I ſhall ſhew you in twenty ſeveral ſteps.

1. *A man may have much knowledge, much light; he may know much of God, and his will, much of Chriſt, and his wayes,* and yet be but almoſt *a Chriſtian.*

For though there can be no Grace without knowledge, yet there may be much knowledge where there is no Grace: Illumination often goes before, when Converſion never follows after. The Subject of Knowledge is the underſtanding, the Subject of Holineſs is the Will. Now a man may have his Underſtanding enlightned, and yet his Will not at all ſanctified. He may have an Underſtanding to know God, and yet want a Will to obey God. The Apoſtle tells us of ſome, that *when they knew* God, *yet* Rom. 1. 21. *they glorified him not as* God.

To make a man altogether a Chriſtian, there muſt be light in the *Head*, and heat in the *Heart*, knowledge in the *Underſtanding*, and zeal in the *Affections*.

Some have zeal and no knowledge, that is blind Devotion, ſome have knowledge and no zeal, that is fruitleſs Speculation; but where knowledge is joyned with zeal, that makes a true Chriſtian. But

But is it not ſaid, *This is Life Eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent?* Joh. 17. 3. Object.

It is not every knowledge of God and Chriſt that intereſts the Soul in Life eternal. For why then do the Devils periſh? they have more knowledge of God than all the men in the World; for though by their fall they loſt their Holineſs, yet they loſt not their Knowledge. Anſw.

They are called Δαίμονες from their Knowledge, and yet they are Διάβολοι from their Malice, Devils ſtill.

Knowledge may fill the Head, but it will never better the Heart, if there be not ſomewhat elſe. The *Phariſees* had much knowledge; *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and reſteſt in the Law, and makeſt thy boaſt of God, and knoweſt his will*, &c. and yet they were a Generation of Hypocrites. Rom. 2. 17, 18.

Alas, how many have gone loaded with knowledge to Hell? *Sinite Sapientes hujus mundi ſapienter deſcendere ad Infernum.*

Though it is true, that it is Life Eternal to know God and Jeſus Chriſt, yet it is as true, that many do know God, and Jeſus Chriſt, that ſhall never ſee Life Eternal.

There is, you muſt know, a twofold knowledge; the one is common, but not ſaving; the other is not common, but ſaving; common knowledge is that which floats in the Head, but doth not influence nor affect the Heart. This knowledge Reprobates may have: *Balaam ſaw* Chriſt *from the top of the Rocks, and from the Hills.* Num. 23. 10.

Naturaliſts ſay, that there is a Pearl in the Toads Head, and yet her Belly is full of Poyſon. The *French* have a Berry which

they

they call *uve de ſpine*, the Grape of a Thorn.

The common knowledge of Chriſt is the pearl in the Toads-Head, the Grape that grows upon Thorns, it may be found in men unſanctified.

And then there is a ſaving Knowledge of God and Chriſt which doth include the aſſent of the mind, and the conſent of the will, this is a Knowledge that implies faith;

Iſa. 53. 11. *By his knowledge ſhall my Righteous Servant juſtifie many.*

And this is that Knowledge which leads to Life Eternal: Now whatever that meaſure of knowledge is, which a man may have of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt, yet if it be not this ſaving knowledge, knowledge joyned with affection and application, he is but almoſt a Chriſtian.

He only knows God aright, who knows how to obey him, and obeys according to

Pſal. 111. 16. his knowledge of him; *A good underſtanding have all they that do his Commandments.*

All knowledge without this, makes a man but like *Nebuchadnezzers* Image, with a *head of Gold, and feet of Clay.*

Some know, but to know.

Some know, to be known.

Some know to practiſe what they know.

Now to know, but to know, that's curioſity.

To know, to be known, that's vain glory.

But to know, to practiſe what we know, that is Goſpel duty.

This makes a man a compleat Chriſtian; the other without this makes a man *almoſt* and yet but *almoſt* a Chriſtian.

2. *A man may have great and eminent gifts yea ſpiritual gifts*, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian. The gift of prayer is a ſpiritual gift; now this a man may have, and yet be but almoſt a *Chriſtian*; for the gift of Prayer is one thing, the grace of Prayer is another.

The gift of Preaching and propheſying is a ſpiritual gift, now this a man may have, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*. *Judas* was a great Preacher, ſo were they that came to Chriſt, and ſaid, *Lord, Lord, we have propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name have caſt out Devils*, &c. 1 Cor. 12. 10. Mat. 7. 22.

You muſt know, that it is not gifts, but grace, which makes a Chriſtian: For,

1. Gifts are from a common work of the Spirit, now a man may partake of all the common gifts of the Spirit, and yet be a Reprobate; for therefore they are called common, becauſe they are indifferently diſpenſed by the Spirit to good and bad; to them that are Believers, and to them that are not.

They that have grace, have gifts; and they that have no grace, may have the ſame gifts; for the Spirit works in both; nay in this ſenſe, he that hath no grace, may be under a greater work of the Spirit (*quoad hoc*) as to this thing, than he that hath moſt grace; a graceleſs profeſſor may have greater gifts than the moſt Holy Believer: He may out-pray, and out-preach, and out-do them; but they in ſincerity and integrity out-go him.

2. Gifts

Eph. 4. 12. *Dona dantur in adjutoriam gratiæ.* The Raven was an unclean Bird. God makes uſe of her to feed *Elijah*; though ſhe was not good Meat; yet it was good Meat ſhe brought.

2. Gifts are for the uſe and good of others, they are given *in ordine ad alium*, as the School-men ſpeak, for the profiting and edifying of others; ſo ſays the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* 12. 7. *They are given to profit withall.*

Now a man may edifie another by his Gifts, and yet be unedified himſelf; he may be profitable to another, and yet unprofitable to himſelf.

A lame man may with his Crutch point to thee the right way, and yet not be able to walk in it himſelf: A crooked Taylor may make a Suit to fit a ſtreight body, though it fit not him that made it, becauſe of his crookedneſs.

The Church (Chriſts Garden encloſed) may be watered through a wooden gutter, the Sun may give light through a ſluttiſh window, and the Field may be well ſowed with a dirty hand.

The efficacy of the Word doth not depend upon the Authority of him that ſpeaks it, but upon the Authority of the God that bleſſes it. So that another may be converted by my Preaching, and yet I may be a 1Cor. 9. 27. *caſt-away* notwithſtanding. *Balaam* makes a clear and rare Propheſie of Chriſt, and yet he hath no benefit by Chriſt; *There ſhall come a ſtar out of* Jacob, *and a Scepter ſhall riſe out of* Iſrael; but yet *Balaam* ſhall have no benefit by it; *I ſhall ſee him, but not now; I ſhall behold him, but not nigh*, Numbers 24. 17.

God may uſe a mans Gifts to bring another unto Chriſt, when he himſelf, whoſe gifts God uſes, may be a ſtranger unto Chriſt;

Chriſt; one man may confirm another in the Faith, and yet himſelf may be a ſtranger into the Faith. *Pendleton* ſtrengthens and confirms *Sanders*, in Q. *Maries* dayes, to ſtand in the truth he had Preached, and to ſeal it with his Blood, and yet afterwards plays the Apoſtate himſelf. *Act. & Mon.* laſt *Edit.* 3. v. p. 141.

Scultetus tells us of one *Johannes Speiſe-rus*, a famous Preacher of *Auſborough* in *Germany*, in the year 1523. who Preached the Goſpel ſo powerfully, that divers common *Harlots* were converted, and became good Chriſtians, and yet himſelf afterwards turned Papiſt, and came to a miſerable end. *Scultet. Annal.* p. 118.

Thus the Candle may burn bright to light others in their Work, and yet afterwards go out in a ſtink.

3. It is beyond the power of the greateſt Gifts to change the heart; a man may Preach like an Apoſtle, Pray like an Angel, and yet may have the heart of a Devil. It is Grace only that can change the heart; the greateſt Gifts can't change it, but the leaſt *Grace* can; Gifts may make a man a Scholar, but Grace makes a man a Believer.

Now if Gifts can't change the heart, then a man may have the greateſt Gifts, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

4. Many have gone loaden with Gifts to Hell; no doubt *Judas* had great Gifts, for he was a Preacher of the Goſpel; and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt would not ſet him in the work, and not fit him for the work; yet *Judas is gone to his own place*; the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* were men of great Gifts, and yet, *Where is the wiſe? Where is the Scribe?*

1 Cor. 1.20. and 1. 18. *The Preaching of the Croſs, is to them that periſh, fooliſhneſs.*

Them that periſh, who are they? who? the wiſe and the learned, both among *Jews* and *Greeks*; theſe are called *them that periſh. Surgunt indocti & rapiunt cœlum dum nos cum doctrina noſtra in Gehennam detrudimur*, ſaid a great Biſhop when he ſaw a poor ſhepherd weeping over a Toad. The poor illiterate world attain to Heaven, while we with all our learning fall into hell.

There are three things muſt be done for us, if ever we would avoid periſhing.

We muſt be throughly convinced of ſin.

We muſt be really united to Chriſt.

We muſt be inſtated in the Covenant of Grace.

Now the greateſt gifts cannot ſtead us in any one of theſe.

They cannot work thorough convictions.

They cannot effect our Union.

They cannot bring us into Covenant relation.

And conſequently they cannot preſerve from eternal periſhing; and if ſo, then a man may have the greateſt *Gifts*, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Joh. 4. 14.

5. Gifts may decay and periſh: They do not lye beyond the reach of Corruption; indeed Grace ſhall never Periſh, but Gifts will; Grace is incorruptible, though Gifts are not; Grace is *a Spring, whoſe waters fail not*, but the ſtreams of Gifts may be dryed up. If Grace be corruptible in its own *nature*, as being but a Creature; yet it is incorruptible in regard of its conſerver, as being the new creature; he that did create it

Iſa. 58. 11.

it in us, will conſerve it in us; he that did begin it, will alſo finiſh it. Heb. 12. 2.

Gifts have their Root in Nature, but Grace hath its Root in Chriſt; and therefore thô Gifts may dye and wither, yet Graee ſhall abide for ever.

Now if Gifts are periſhing, then (though he that hath the *leaſt Grace* is a Chriſtian, yet) he that hath the greateſt *gifts* may be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

But doth not the Apoſtle bid us, *covet earneſtly the beſt gifts?* 1 Cor. 12. 31. Why muſt we covet them, and covet them earneſtly, if they avail not to Salvation. *Object.*

Gifts are good, though they are not the beſt good; they are excellent, but there is ſomewhat more excellent; ſo it follows in the ſame verſe; *yet I ſhew unto you a more excellent way*, and that is the way of Grace; one dram of Grace is more worth than a Talent of Gifts: Gifts may make us rich towards men, but it is Grace that makes us *rich towards God.* *Anſw.* Luk. 12. 21.

Our Gifts profit others, but Grace profits our ſelves; that whereby I profit another is good, but that whereby I am profited my ſelf is better.

Now becauſe Gifts are good, therefore we ought to covet them; but becauſe they are not the beſt good, therefore we ought not to reſt in them; we muſt covet Gifts for the good of others, that they may be edified; and we muſt covet Grace for the good of our own Souls, that they may be ſaved; for whoſoever be bettered by our Gifts, yet we ſhall miſcarry without Grace.

3. *A man may have a high Profession of Religion, be much in external duties of Godliness, and yet be but almost a Christian.* Mark what our Lord Christ tells them in *Mat.* 7. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; that is, not every one that makes a profession of Christ, shall therefore be owned for a true
Rom. 6. 9. Disciple of Christ; *All are not Israel that are of Israel*; nor are all Christians that make a Profession of Religion.

What a goodly Profession had *Judas!* he followed Christ, left all for Christ, he preached the Gospel of Christ, he cast out Devils in the name of Christ, he eat and drank at the Table of Christ, and yet *Judas* was but an Hypocrite.

Most Professors are like Lillies, fair in shew, but foul in scent; or like Pepper, hot in the mouth, but cold in the stomach. The finest Lace may be upon the coursest Cloth.

It is a great deceit to measure the substance of our Religion by the bulk of our Profession, and to judge of the strength of our Graces by the length of our Duties. The Scriptures speak of some, who having
2 Tim. 3. 5. *a form of godliness, yet deny the power thereof.* Deny the power, that is, they don't live in the practice of those Graces which they pretend to in their Duties; he that pretends to Godliness by a specious Profession, and yet doth not practise Godliness by a holy Conversation, *he hath a form, but denies the power.*

Loquitur hic ut Piso. vivit ut Gallenus. *Hugo* compares such to the Ostrich, *qui alas habet, sed non volat*, which hath great Wings, t

wings, but yet flies not; many have the wings of a fair profeſſion, but yet uſe them not to mount upward in ſpiritual affections, and a Heavenly converſation.

But to clear the truth of this, That a man may make a high profeſſion of Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian; take a four-fold evidence.

1. If a man may profeſs Religion, and yet never have his heart changed, nor his ſtate better'd, then he may be a great Profeſſor, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

But a man may profeſs Religion, and yet never have his heart changed, nor his ſtate renewed.

He may be a conſtant hearer of the word, and yet be a ſinner ſtill; he may come often to the Lords Table, and yet go away a ſinner as he came? we muſt not think that duties, *ex opere operato*, can confer Grace.

Many a Soul hath been converted by Chriſt in an Ordinance, but never was any Soul converted by an Ordinance without Chriſt.

And doth Chriſt convert all that ſit under the Ordinances? ſurely no, for to ſome, *the word is a ſavour of death unto death.* 1 Cor. 2. 16.

And if ſo, then it is plain, that a man may profeſs Religion, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

2. A man may profeſs Religion, and live in a form of Godlineſs in Hypocriſie, *Iſa.* 48. 1. *Hear ye this, O houſe of Jacob, which are called by the name of Iſrael, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which ſware by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Iſrael, but not in truth, nor in Righteouſneſs.* What do ye think of theſe? *They*

make mention of the name of the Lord, there is their profeſſion; *but not in truth, nor in righteouſneſs*, there is their diſſimulation; and indeed there could be no Hypocriſie in a religious ſenſe, were it not for a Profeſſion of Religion; for he that is wicked and carnal and vile inwardly, and appears to be ſo outwardly, he is no Hypocrite, but is what he appears, and appears what he is.

Hypocrita cupit videri juſtus.

But he that is one thing really, and another thing ſeemingly, is carnal and unholy and yet ſeems to be good and holy, he is a Hypocrite.

Tollet Inſtit. Sacred. l. 8. c. 9.

Thus the *Caſuiſts* define Hypocriſie to be *Simulatio Sanctitatis*, a counterfeiting of holineſs, and this fits exactly with the Greek word ὑπόκρισις, which is from ὑποκείνομαι to counterfeit.

פָּנִים חָנֵף from the root חָנַף

And to this purpoſe, the Hebrews have two words for Hypocrites, *Panim* which ſignifies *facies*, and *Chanepim* which ſignifies *Counterfeits*, from *Chanaph*, to diſſemble ſo that he is an Hypocrite that diſſembles Religion, and weareth the face of Holineſs, and yet is without the grace of Holineſs; he appears to be in ſemblance, what he is not in ſubſtance, he wears a form of Godlineſs without, only as a cover of a Prophane heart within.

He hath a *Profeſſion* that he may not be thought wicked; but it is but a *Profeſſion* and therefore he is wicked.

He is the Religious Hypocrite; *Religious* becauſe he pretends to it; and yet an Hypocrite, becauſe he doth but pretend to it; he is like many men in a Conſumption; they have freſh looks, and yet rotten Lungs:

like an Apple that hath a skin fair, but a rotten Coar; many appear righteous, who are only righteous in appearance.

And if ſo, then a man may profeſs Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

3. Cuſtom and Faſhion may create a man a Profeſſor; as you have many that wear this or that Garb, not becauſe it keeps them warmer, or hath any excellency in it more than another, but meerly for faſhion.

Many muſt have powder'd hair, ſpotted faces, feathers in their Caps, *&c.* for no other end, but becauſe they would be fools in faſhion.

So many profeſs Chriſtianity, not becauſe the means of Grace warms the Heart, or that they ſee any excellency in the ways of God above the World, but meerly to follow the faſhion; I wiſh I might not ſay, it hath been true of our dayes, becauſe Religion hath been uppermoſt, therefore many have profeſſed; it hath been the gaining Trade, and then moſt will be of that Trade.

Religion in credit makes many Profeſſors, but few Proſelytes; but when Religion ſuffers, then its Confeſſors are no more than its Converts, for Cuſtom makes the former, but Conſcience the latter.

He that is a Profeſſor of Religion meerly for cuſtom-ſake, when it proſpers, will never be a Martyr for Chriſt's ſake, when Religion ſuffers.

He that owns the truth, to live upon that, will diſown it when it comes to live upon him.

They ſay, that when a Houſe is decaying and falling, all the Rats and Mice will for-

ſake it: while the houſe is firm, and they may ſhelter in the roof, they'l ſtay, but no longer; leſt in the decay, the fall ſhould be upon them. and they that lived at top ſhould lye at bottom.

My Brethren, may I not ſay, we have many that are the Vermine, the Rats and Mice of Religion, that would live under the roof of it, while they might have ſhelter in it: but when it ſuffers, forſake it, leſt it ſhould fall, and the fall ſhould be upon them; I am perſwaded this is not the leaſt reaſon why God hath brought the wheel upon the profeſſion of Religion, *viz.* to rid it of the Vermine.

He ſhakes the Foundation of the Houſe, that theſe Rats and Mice may quit the roof; not to overturn it, but to rid them out of it, as the Husbandman fans the Wheat, that he may get rid of the Chaff. The Halcion-days of the Goſpel provoke hypocriſie, but the ſufferings for Religion prove ſincerity.

Now then if cuſtom and faſhion make many men profeſſors, then a man may profeſs Religion, *and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

4. If many may periſh under a profeſſion of Godlineſs, then a man may profeſs Religion, *and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Now the Scripture is clear, that a man may periſh under the higheſt profeſſion of Religion. *Chriſt curſed the Fig-tree, that had leaves and no Fruit.* It is ſaid, *Mat.* 8. 12. *that the Children of the Kingdom ſhall be caſt out into outer darkneſs.* Who were theſe, but they that were then the only people of
Pſal. 50. 5. God in the world by profeſſion, *that had*

made

made a Covenant with him by ſacrifice? and yet theſe caſt out.

In *Mat.* 7. 22. You read of ſome that came and made boaſt of their Profeſſion to Chriſt, hoping that might ſave them; *Lord,* (ſay they) *have we not Propheſyed in thy name,* Mat. 7. 22. *caſt out Devils in thy name, done many wonderful works in thy name?*

Now what ſaith our Lord Chriſt to this? *Then I will profeſs unto them, I never knew you;* Verſe 23. *depart from me.*

Mark, here are them that Propheſie in his Name, and yet periſh in his Wrath; in his Name caſt out Devils, and then are caſt out themſelves; *in his Name do many wonderful works,* and yet periſh for wicked workers.

The Profeſſion of Religion will no more keep a man from periſhing, than calling a Ship the *Safeguard*, or the *Goodſpeed*, will keep her from drowning.

As many go to Heaven with the fear of Hell in their hearts, ſo many go to Hell with the name of Chriſt in their Mouths. Now then, if many may periſh under a profeſſion of Godlineſs, then may a man be a high Profeſſor of Religion, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

But is it not ſaid by the Lord Chriſt himſelf, *He that Confeſſes me before men, him will* Mat. 10. 32. *I confeſs before my Father in Heaven?* Object.

Now for Chriſt to ſay, he will confeſs us before the Father, is equivalent to a Promiſe of eternal life; for if Jeſus Chriſt confeſs us, God the Father will never diſown us.

True, they that confeſs Chriſt, ſhall be confeſſed by him; and it is as true, that

this Confession is equivalent to a promise of Salvation. But now you must know, that professing Christ, is not confessing him; for to profess Christ is one thing, to confess Christ is another: Confession is a living Testimony for Christ, in a time when Religion suffers, Profession may be only a lifeless Formality in a time when Religion prospers. To confess Christ, is to choose his wayes, and own them. To profess Christ, is to plead for his wayes, and yet live besides them. Profession may be from a feigned love to the wayes of Christ, but Confession is from a rooted love to the Person of Christ.

To profess Christ, is to own him when none deny him; to confess Christ, is to plead for him, and suffer for him, when others oppose him; Hypocrites may be Professors, but the Martyrs are the true Confessors: Profession is a *swimming* down the Stream, Confession is a swimming against the Stream. Now many may swim with the Stream (like the dead Fish) that cannot swim against the Stream with the living Fish; many may profess Christ, that can't confess Christ, and so, notwithstanding their Profession, yet are but *almost Christians.*

4. To come yet nearer; *A man may go far in opposing his Sin, and yet be but almost a Christian.* How far a Man may go in this work, I shall shew you in seven gradual Instances.

1. A man *may be convinced of Sin, and yet be but almost a Christian:* For,

1. Conviction may be rational, as well as spiritual; it may be from a natural Conscience enlightned by the Word, without the

the effectual work of the Spirit, applying Sin to the Heart.

2. Convictions may be worn out; they many times go off, and end not in sound Conversion; saith the Church, *We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have brought forth wind.* This is the complaint of the Church in reference to the unprofitableness of their Afflictions; and it may be the complaint of most in reference to the unprofitableness of their Convictions. Isa. 26. 18.

3. Many take Convictions of Sin to be Conversion from Sin, and so sit down, and rest in their Convictions. That is a sad complaint God makes of *Ephraim*; *Ephraim is an unwise Son, for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of Children.* Now then, if Convictions may be only from natural Conscience, if they may be worn out, or may be mistaken, and rested in for Conversion, then a man may have Convictions, and be but almost a Christian. Hos. 13. 13.

Secondly, *A man may mourn for Sin, and yet be but almost a Christian*; so did *Saul*, so did *Esau*, for the loss of his Birth-right, which was his Sin, and therefore he is called by the Spirit of God, *Prophane Esau*; yet he sought it again carefully with *tears.* Heb. 12. 16, 17.

But doth not christ pronounce them blessed that mourn? *Mat.* 5. 4. *Blessed are they that mourn.* *Obj.*

Sure then, if a man mourn for Sin, he is in a good condition: You see, saith *Nazianzen*, τῷ συναχυῷ τὴν σωτηρίαν συνεζευγμένην, that Salvation is joyned with Sorrow. *Orat.* 17. *Greg. Naz.*

I answer, It is true, that they who mourn for Sin in the sense Christ there speaks of, *Sol.*

are bleſſed; but all mourning for ſin, doth not therefore render us bleſſed.

1. True mourning for ſin muſt flow from ſpiritual convictions of the evil and vileneſs, and damnable nature of ſin.

Now all that mourn for ſin, don't do it from a thorough-work of ſpiritual Conviction upon the Soul; they have not a right ſenſe of the evil and vileneſs of ſin.

2. True mourning for ſin, is more for the evil that is in ſin, than the evil that comes by ſin; more becauſe it diſhonours God, and wounds Chriſt, and grieves the Spirit, and makes the ſoul unlike God, than becauſe it damns the Soul.

Now there are many that mourn for ſin, not ſo much for the evil that is in it, as for the evil that it brings with it; there is mourning for ſin in Hell; you read of *weeping and wailing there.* The damned are weeping and mourning to eternity, there is all ſorrow, and no comfort; as in Heaven there is peace without trouble, joy without mourning, ſo in Hell there is trouble without peace, mourning without joy, weeping and wailing inceſſantly; but it is for the evil they feel by ſin, and not for the evil that is in ſin: So that a man may mourn for ſin, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian:* it may grieve him to think of periſhing for ſin, when it doth not grieve him that he is defiled and polluted by ſin.

Mat. 8. 12.

Thirdly; *A man may make large confeſſion of ſin, to God, to others, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

How ingenuouſly doth *Saul* confeſs his ſin to *David, I have ſinned* (ſaith he,) *thou art*

art more righteous than I! Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. 1Sam.24.17 and 26. 21.

So *Judas* makes a full confeſſion; *I have ſinned in betraying innocent blood.* Mat.27.4.

Yet *Saul* and *Judas* were both rejected of God; ſo that a man may confeſs ſin, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

But is not confeſſion of ſin, a character of a Child of God? Doth not the Apoſtle ſay, *If we confeſs our ſins, God is juſt and faithful to forgive them:* No man was ever kept out of Heaven for his confeſſed badneſs, though many are kept out of Heaven for their ſuppoſed goodneſs. Object. 1 Joh. 1. 9. *Peccatorum confeſſio & necdoche univerſam pœnitentiam hoc loco ſignificat.* Vorſt. in loc.

Judah, in *Hebrew* ſignifies *confeſſion*; now *Judah* got the Kingdom from *Reuben*; confeſſion of ſin is the way to the Kingdom of Heaven.

There are ſome that confeſs ſin, and are ſaved; there are others that confeſs ſin and periſh.

1. Many confeſs ſin meerly out of cuſtom, and not out of Conſcience: you ſhall have many that will never pray, but they will make a long confeſſion of ſin, and yet never feel the weight or burden of it upon their Conſciences.

2. Many will confeſs leſſer ſins, and yet conceal greater; like the Patient in *Plutarch*, that complained to his Phyſician of his finger when his Liver was rotten.

3. Many will confeſs ſin in the general, or confeſs themſelves ſinners; and yet ſee little, and ſay leſs of their particular ſins, an implicite confeſſion (as one ſaith) is almoſt as bad as an implicite faith.

Where confeſſion is right, it will be diſtinct, eſpecially of thoſe ſins that were our chief Sins.

Psal. 51. 4. 14. 1 Tim. 1. 13, 19. So *David confesses his blood-guiltiness and Adultery*; So *Paul his Blasphemy, Persecution,* and *Injury against the Saints.* It is bad to hear men confess they are great Sinners, and yet can't confess their Sins.

Though the least Sin be too bad to be committed, yet there is no Sin too bad to be confessed.

4. Many will confess Sin, but it is only under extremity, that is not free and voluntary. *Pharaoh* confesses his Sin, but it was when Judgment compelled him.

Exod. 10. 16. *I have sinned against the Lord*, saith he, but it was when he had eight Plagues upon him.

Many do by their Sins, as Mariners do by their Goods, cast them out in a storm, wishing for them again in a calm. Confession should come like Water out of a Spring, which runs freely, not like Water out of a Still, which is forced by Fire.

5. Many confess their Sin, but with no intent to forsake sin; they confess the Sins they have committed, but don't leave the Sins they have confessed.

Many men use Confession as *Lewis* the Eleventh of *France* did his Crucifix; he would swear an Oath, and then kiss it, and swear again, and then kiss it again.

So many sin, and then confess they do not well, but yet never strive to do better.

Mr. *Tosshel* tells a story of a Minister he knew, that would be often drunk, and when he came into the Pulpit, would confess it very lamentingly; and yet no sooner was he out of the Pulpit, but he would be drunk again; and this would he do as constantly as men follow their Trades. Now,

Now then, if a man may confeſs Sin meerly out of cuſtom; if he may confeſs leſſer Sins, and yet conceal greater; if he may confeſs Sin only in the General, or only under extremity, or if he may confeſs Sin without any intent to forſake Sin, then ſurely a man may confeſs Sin, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Fourthly, *A man may forſake Sin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*; he may leave his Luſt, and his wicked wayes, which he ſometimes lived in, and in the judgment of the World become a new man, and yet not be a new Creature. *Simon Magus*, when he hears *Philip* preaching concerning the Kingdom of God, leaves his Sorcery and Witchcraft, and believes. Act. 8. 13

But you'l ſay, this ſeems contrary to Scripture; for that ſays, *He that confeſſeth, and forſaketh Sin, ſhall have mercy:* But I confeſs Sin, yea, not only ſo, but alſo I forſake Sin; ſure therefore his mercy is my portion, it belongs to me. Object. Pro. 28. 13.

It is true, that where the Soul forſakes Sin from a right principle, after a right manner, to a right end; where he forſakes Sin, as Sin, as being contrary to God, and the purity of his Nature. *Sol.*

This declares that Soul to be right with God, and the Promiſe ſhall be made good to it, *He ſhall find mercy.*

But now pray mind, there is a forſaking Sin that is not right, but unſound.

1. Open Sins may be deſerted, and yet ſecret Sins may be retained; now this is not a right forſaking; ſuch a Soul ſhall never find mercy. A man may be cured of a wound

wound in his fleſh, and yet may dye of an impoſtume in his Bowels.

2. A man may forſake ſin, but not as ſin; for he that forſakes ſin as ſin, forſakes all ſin; *A quatenus ad omne valet conſequentia:* it is impoſſible for a man to forſake ſin as ſin, unleſs he forſakes all that he knows to be ſin.

3. A man may let one ſin go, to hold another the faſter; as a man that goes to Sea, would willingly ſave all his goods, but if the ſtorm ariſes that he cannot, then he throws ſome over board to lighten the Veſſel, and ſave the reſt. So did they, *Acts* 27. 38.

So the ſinner chuſes to keep all his ſins, but if a ſtorm ariſes in his Conſcience, why then he will heave one luſt over-board to ſave the life of another.

4. A man may let all ſin go, and yet be a Sinner ſtill; for there is the root of all ſin in the heart, though the fruit be not ſeen in the life; the tree lives, though the Boughs be lopt off.

As a man is a ſinner before ever he acts ſin, ſo (till grace renew him) he is a ſinner, though he leaves ſin; for there is original
Pſal. 51. 5. ſin in him enough to damn and deſtroy him.

5. Sin may be left, and yet be loved; a man may forſake the life of ſin, and yet retain the love of ſin, now though leaving ſin makes him almoſt a Chriſtian, yet loving ſin ſhews he is but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

It is a leſs evil to do ſin, and not love it, than to love ſin and not do it; for to do ſin may argue only weakneſs of *Grace*, but to love ſin argues ſtrength of *luſt*. *What I hate, that do I*, Rom. 7. 15. Sin

Sin is bad in any part of man, but ſin in the affection is worſe than ſin in the Converſation; for ſin in the Converſation may be only from infirmity, but ſin in the affection is the fruit of choice and unregeneracy.

6. All ſin may be chained; and yet the heart not changed, and ſo the nature of the ſinner is the ſame as ever.

A Dog chained up, is a Dog ſtill, as much as if he was let looſe to devour.

There may be a ceſſation of arms between enemies, and yet the quarrel may remain on foot ſtill; there may be a making truce, where there is no making Peace.

A ſinner may lay the weapons of ſin out of his hand, and yet the enmity againſt God ſtill remain in his heart.

There may be a truce, he may not ſin againſt him, but there can be no Peace 'till he be united unto him.

Reſtraining grace holds in the ſinner, but it is renewing Grace that changes the Nature. Now many are held in by grace from being open ſinners, that are not renewed by Grace, and made true Believers.

Now then, if a man may forſake open ſins, and retain ſecret ſins; if he may forſake ſin, but not as ſin, if he may let one ſin go, to hold another the faſter; if a man may let all ſin go, and yet be a ſinner ſtill; if ſin may be left, and yet be loved: Finally, if all ſin may be chained, and yet the heart not changed, then a man may forſake ſin, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*.

Fifthly,

2 Sam. 13. 22. 28.

Fifthly, *A man may hate Sin, and yet be but almost a Christian.* *Absalom* hated *Amnon*'s Uncleanness with his Sister *Thamar*, yea, his hatred was so great, as that he slew him for it, and yet *Absalom* was but a wicked man.

Object.

But the Scripture makes it a sign of a gracious Heart to hate Sin; yea, though a man do through infirmity fall into Sin, yet if he hates it, this is a proof of Grace. *Paul* proves the sincerity of his Heart, and the truth of his Grace, by this hatred of Sin, though he committed it, *Rom.* 7. 15. *What I hate, that do I.*

Nay, what is Grace, but *conformitas cum Archetypo*, a conformity of the Soul to God, to love as God loves, to hate as God hates: Now God hates Sin, it is one part of his Holiness to hate all Sin.

And if I hate Sin, then am I conformed to God, and if I am conformed to God, then am I altogether a Christian.

Sol.

It is true, that there is a hatred of Sin, which is a sign of Grace, and which flows from a principle of Grace, and is Grace: As for instance,

To hate Sin as it is an offence to God, a wrong to his Majesty; to hate Sin as it is a breach of the Command, and so a wicked controlling God's Will, which is the only rule of goodness, to hate Sin, as being a disingenuous transgression of that Law of Love established in the blood and death of Christ, and so in a degree a *crucifying of Christ afresh.*

To hate Sin as being a grieving and quenching the Spirit of God, as all Sin in its nature is.

Thus

Thus to hate Sin is Grace, and thus every true Chriſtian hates Sin.

But though every man that hath Grace, hates Sin, yet every man that hates Sin, hath not Grace; For,

A man may hate Sin from other Principles, not as it is a wrong to God, or a wounding *Chriſt*, or a grieving the Spirit, for then he would hate all Sin; for there is no Sin but hath this in the nature of it. But,

1. A man may hate Sin for the ſhame that attends it, more than for the evil that is in it. Some Sinners there are, who declare *their Sin as* Sodom, *and hide it not.* They are ſet down in the *ſeat of the ſcornful, they glory in their ſhame*, Phil. 3. 19. But now others there are who are aſhamed of Sin, and therefore hate it, not for the Sins ſake, but the ſhame's ſake. This made *Abſolom* hate *Amnon*'s Uncleanneſs, becauſe it brought ſhame upon him and his Siſter. Pſal. 1. 1.

2. A man may hate Sin more in others than in himſelf: So doth the Drunkard, he hates Drunkenneſs in another, and yet practiſes it himſelf: The Lyar hates falſhood in another, but likes it in himſelf. Now he that hates Sin from a Principle of Grace, hates Sin moſt in himſelf; he hates Sin in others, but he loaths moſt the Sins of his own Heart.

3. A man may hate one Sin as being contrary to another. There is a great contrariety between Sin and Sin, between Luſt and Luſt; It is the excellency of the life of Grace, that it is a uniform life; there is no one Grace contrary to another; the Graces of

of Gods Spirit are different, but not differing, faith, and love, and holiness, are all one: they consist together at the same time, in the same subject; nay they can't be parted; there can be no faith without love, no love without holiness; and so on the other hand, no holiness without love, no love without faith. So that this makes the life of grace an easie and excellent life, but now the life of sin is a distracting contradictious life, wherein a man is a servant to contrary lusts: the lust of pride and prodigality, is contrary to the lust of covetousness, *&c.*

Tit. 3. 3.

Now when one lust gets to be the Master-lust in the Soul, then that works a hatred of its contrary; where covetousness gets the heart, there the heart hates pride; and where pride gets uppermost in the heart, there the heart hates covetousness. Thus a man may hate sin, not from a Principle of *Grace*, but from the contrariety of *Lust*.

He don't hate any sin as it is sin, but he hates it, as being contrary to his beloved sin.

Now then if a man may hate sin for the shame that attends it: if he may hate sin more in others, than in himself: and if he may hate one sin as being contrary to another, then he may hate sin, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

Sixthly, *A man may make great vows and promises, he may have strong purposes and resolutions against sin, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

This did *Saul*, he promises and resolves against his sin, *Return my Son David*, saith he, *for I will no more do thee harm.* What promises

1 Sam. 26, 21.

promiſes and reſolves did *Pharaoh* make againſt that Sin of detaining Gods people? Saith he. *I will let the people go, that they may do Sacrifice to the Lord:* And again, *I will let ye go, and ye ſhall ſtay no longer,* Exod. 9. 28. And yet *Saul* and *Pharaoh* both periſhed in their ſins: the greateſt purpoſes and promiſes againſt ſin, will not make a man a Chriſtian: For, Exod. 8. 8.

1. Purpoſes and Promiſes againſt ſin, never hurt ſin: we ſay, *threatned folk live long*; and truly ſo do threatned ſins. It is not new purpoſes, but a new nature, that muſt help us againſt ſin; purpoſes may bring to the birth, but without a new nature, *there is no ſtrength to bring forth.* The new nature is the beſt ſoil for holy purpoſes to grow in; otherwiſe they wither and dye, like plants in an improper ſoil.

2. Troubles and afflictions may provoke us to large purpoſes and promiſes againſt ſin for the future; what more common than to vow, and not to pay; to make vows in the day of trouble, which we make no Conſcience to pay in the day of peace? Many Covenant againſt ſin, when trouble is upon them; and then ſin againſt their Covenant, when it is removed from them.

It was a brave rule that *Pliny* in one of his Epiſtles gave his friend to live by, *Ut tales eſſe perſeveremus ſani, quales nos futuros eſſe profitemur infirmi; That we ſhould continue to be ſuch when we are well, as we promiſe to be when we are ſick.*

Many are our ſick-bed promiſes, but we are no ſooner well, but we grow ſick of our promiſes.

3. Pur-

3. Purposes and resolves against Sin for the future, may be only a temptation to put off Repentance for the present; Satan may put a man on to good purposes, to keep him from present attempts.

He knows, whatever we purpose, yet the strength of performance is not in our selves.

He knows that purposes for the future, are a putting God off for the present; they are a secret *will not*, to a present opportunity. That is a notable passage, *Luk. 9. 59. Follow me*, saith Christ, to the two men; Now see what answers they give to Christ; *Suffer me first to go and bury my Father*, says one; This man purposes to follow Christ, only he would stay to bury his Father: Says the other, *Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go and bid them farewell which are at my house*, verse 61. I will follow thee, but only I would first go and take my leave of my Friends, or set my House in order; and yet we do not find that ever they followed Christ, notwithstanding their fair purposes.

4. Nature unsanctified may be so far wrought on, as to make great Promises and purposes against Sin.

1. A natural man may have great Convictions of Sin from the workings of an enlightened Conscience.

2. He may approve of the Law of God.

3. he may have a desire to be saved.

Now these three together; The workings of Conscience, the sight of the goodness of the Law; a desire to be saved, may bring forth in a man great purposes against Sin, and yet he may have no heart to perform his own purposes. This was much

what

what the caſe of them, *Deut.* 5. ſay they to *Moſes*, verſe 27. *Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God ſhall ſay; and tell thou it to us, and we will hear it, and do it.*

This is a fair promiſe, and ſo God takes it, *ver.* 28. *I have heard the words of this people, they have well ſaid all that they have ſpoken.* So ſaid, and ſo done, had been well, but it was better ſaid than done; for though they had a tongue to promiſe, yet they had no heart to perform, and this God ſaw, therefore ſaid he, *v.* 29. *O that there were ſuch an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my Commandments always, that it might be well with them!*

They promiſe to fear God and keep his Commandments, but they wanted a new heart to perform what an unſanctified heart had promiſed: It fares with men in this caſe, as it did with that Son in the Goſpel, that ſaid, *He would go into the Vineyard, but went not.* Mat. 21. 30.

Now then if purpoſes and promiſes againſt ſin, never hurt ſin; if preſent afflictions may draw out large *Promiſes*, if they may be the fruit of a *Temptation*, or if from nature unſanctified; ſurely then a man may promiſe and purpoſe much againſt ſin; and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Seventhly, *A man may maintain a ſtrife and combate againſt ſin in himſelf, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* So did *Balaam*, when he went to Curſe the People of God, he had a great ſtrife within himſelf; *How ſhall I Curſe* (ſaith he) *where God hath not Curſed? Or how ſhall I defie whom the Lord hath not defied?* Num. 23. 8.

And

And did not *Pilate* ſtrive againſt his ſin, when he ſaid to the *Jews*, *ſhall I crucifie your King? What evil hath he done? I am innocent of the blood of this juſt man.*

Mark 15.12, 14.
Mat. 27. 24.

Object. But you will ſay, *Is not this an argument of grace, when there is a ſtriving in the Soul againſt ſin? for what ſhould oppoſe ſin in the heart, but grace?* The Apoſtles makes *the luſting of the fleſh againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the fleſh*, to be an argument of grace in the heart. Now I find this ſtrife in my heart, though the remainders of corruption ſometimes break out into actual ſins, yet I find a ſtriving in my Soul againſt ſin.

Gal. 5. 17.

Sol. It is true, there is a ſtriving againſt ſin which is only from grace, and is proper to believers; and there is a ſtriving againſt ſin which is not from grace, and therefore may be in them that are not believers.

There is a ſtrife againſt ſin in one and the ſame faculty; the will againſt the will; the affection againſt the affection, and this is that which the Apoſtle calls *the luſting of the fleſh againſt the Spirit*; that is, the ſtriving of the unregenerate part againſt the regenerate, and this is ever in the faculty, and is proper to believers only.

An unbeliever never finds this ſtrife in himſelf, this ſtrife cannot be in him, it is impoſſible (as ſuch) that is, while he is on this ſide a ſtate of Grace.

But then there is a ſtriving againſt ſin in divers faculties, and this is the ſtrife that is in them that are not Believers, there the ſtrife is between the will and the Conſcience; Conſcience enlightned and terrified with the fear

fear of hell and damnation, that is againſt ſin; the will and affection (not being renewed) they are for ſin. And this cauſes great tuggings and ſtrong combates many times in the ſinners heart. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora ſequor.*

Thus it was with the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, Conſcience convinced them of the Divinity of Chriſt, and of the truth of his being the Son of God, and yet a perverſe will, and carnal affections, cry out, *Crucifie him, Crucifie him.*

Conſcience pleaded for him, he had a witneſs in their Boſoms, and yet their wills were bent againſt him, and therefore they are ſaid *to have reſiſted the Spirit*: viz the workings and convictions of the Spirit in their Conſciences, *Acts* 7. 51. And this is the caſe of many ſinners, when will and affections are for ſin, and plead for it, Conſcience is againſt it, and many times frights the Soul from the doing of it.

And hence men take that which oppoſes ſin in them, to be grace, when it is only the work of a natural Conſcience; they conclude the ſtriſe is between Grace and Sin, the regenerate and unregenerate part, when alas it is no other than the contention of a natural Conſcience againſt a corrupt will and affections.

And if ſo, then a man may have great ſtrifes and combates againſt ſin in him; and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

5. *A man may deſire Grace, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*; ſo did *the five fooliſh Virgins*, Mat. 25. 8. *Give us of your Oyl*; what was that but true grace? it was that Oyl that lighed the wiſe Virgins into the Bridegrooms Chamber. They

They do not only desire to enter in, but they desire Oyl to light them in; wicked men may desire Heaven, desire a Christ to save them; there is none so wicked upon Earth, but desire to be happy in Heaven.

But now here are they that desire Grace as well as Glory, and yet these are but *almost Christians.*

Object. But is it not commonly taught, that *desires of Grace are Grace?* nay, doth not our Lord Mat. 5. 6. Christ himself make it so? *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

Sol. It is true, that there are some desires of Grace which are Grace: As,

1. When a man desires Grace from a right sense of his natural state, when he sees the vileness of Sin, and the woful, defiled and loathsome condition he is in by reason of Sin, and therefore desires the Grace of Christ to renew and change him; this is Grace. This some make to be the lowest degree of saving Faith.

2. When a man joyns proportionable endeavours to his desires; doth not only wish for Grace, but work for Grace, such desires are Grace.

3. When a mans desires are constant and uncessant, that cease not but in the attainment of their Object; such desires are true Grace. They are a part of the especial work of the Spirit. They do really partake of the nature of Grace; now it is a known Maxim, *Quicquid participat de natura totius, est pars totius:* That which partakes of the nature of the whole, is a part of the whole; the filings of Gold are Gold.

The

The Sea is not more really water, than the leaſt drop; the flame is not more really fire, than the leaſt ſpark; for theſe do *participare de natura totius.*

But though all true deſires of grace, are grace; yet all deſires of grace are not true: For,

1. A man may deſire Grace, but not for it ſelf, but for ſomewhat elſe: not Grace for Graces ſake, but for Heavens ſake; he don't deſire Grace, that his nature may be changed, his heart renewed, the Image of God ſtampt upon him, and his Luſts ſubdued in him.

Theſe are bleſſed deſires, found only in true Believers. The true Chriſtian only can deſire Grace for Graces ſake; but the Almoſt Chriſtian may deſire Grace for Heavens ſake.

2. A man may deſire Grace without proportionable endeavours after Grace; many are good at wiſhing, bad at working; like him that lay in the graſs on a Summers day, crying out, *O ſi eſſet laborare,* O that this were to work!

Solomon ſaith, *The deſire of the ſlothful kills him:* How ſo? *For his hands refuſe to labour,* Prov. 21. 25. He periſheth in his deſires.

Virtutem exoptant, contabeſcuntque relicta Perſ.

The Believer joyns deſires and endeavours together; *One thing have I deſired of the Lord, and that I will ſeek after,* Pſal. 27. 4.

3. A mans deſires of Grace may be unſeaſonable; thus the *fooliſh Virgins* deſired Oyl when it was too late.

The

Impii non curant quærere quem tamen desiderant invenire, cupientes consequi, sed non & sequi. Ber. Eccl. 8. 5.

The Believers desires are seasonable; he desires Grace in the season of Grace, and seeks in a time when it may be found. *The wise mans heart knows both time and judgment.* He knows his season, and hath wisdom to improve it.

The silly Sinner doth all his works out of season; he sins away the seasons of grace, and then desires grace when the season is over; the sinner doth all too late, as *Esau* desired the blessing when it was too late, and therefore he lost it; whereas had he come sooner, he had obtained it.

Sero sapiunt Phryges.

Most men are like *Ephimetheus*, wise too late, they come when the Market is done; when God hath shut in shop, then they have their oyl to get.

When they lye upon their death-beds, then they desire Holy Hearts.

Hos. 6. 4. Jon. 4. 6.

4. Desire of grace in many are very unconstant and fleeting, like the *morning dew that quickly passes away:* Or like *Jonah's Gourd*, that springs up in a night, and withers in a night; they have no root in the heart, and therefore quickly perish: Now then, if a man may desire grace, but not for graces sake, if desires may be without endeavours; if a man may desire grace when 'tis too late; if these desires may be but fleeting and inconstant, then may a man desire Grace, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

Dan. 5. 6.

6. *A man may tremble at the Word of God, and yet be but almost a Christian,* as *Belshazzar* did at the hand-writing upon the wall.

Object.

But is not that a note of sincerity and truth of grace, to tremble at the Word?

doth

doth not God ſay, *To him will I look that is of a poor and contrite Spirit, and trembles at my word.* Iſa. 66. 2.

Sol. There is a twofold trembling.

1. One is, when the word diſcovers the guilt of ſin, and the wrath of God that belongs to that guilt; this where Conſcience is awake, cauſes trembling and amazement; thus when *Paul Preached of Righteouſneſs and Judgment*, it is ſaid *Felix trembled.* Acts 24. 25.

2. There is a trembling which ariſes from a holy dread and reverence of the Majeſty of God, ſpeaking in his Word; this is only found in true Believers, and is that which keeps the Soul low in its own eyes. Therefore mark how the words run in *Iſa.* 66. 2. *To him will I look that is of a poor and contrite ſpirit, and trembles at my Word.*

God don't make the promiſe to him that trembles at the Word, *for the Devils believe and tremble*; the Word of God can make the proudeſt, ſtouteſt ſinner in the world to ſhake and tremble, but it is *to the poor and contrite ſpirit that trembles:* Where trembling is the fruit of a ſpirit broken for ſin, and low in its own Eyes, there will God look. Jam. 2. 19.

Now many tremble at the word, but not from poverty of ſpirit, not from a heart broken for ſin, and low in its own Eyes; not from a ſenſe of the Majeſty and Holineſs of God, and therefore notwithſtanding they tremble at the word, yet they are but *almoſt Chriſtians.*

7. *A man may delight in the Word and Ordinances of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian:* Iſa. 58. 2. *They take delight in approaching to God.*

And it is said of that ground, *Mat.* 13. 20. that it *received the Word with Joy*, and yet it was but stony ground.

Object. But is it not made a Character of a godly man, to delight in the word of God? doth

Psal. 1. 2. not *David* say, *He is a blessed man that delights in the Law of the Lord?*

Sol. There is a delighting in the Word, which flows from Grace, and is a proof of blessedness.

1. He that delights in the word because of its spirituality, he is a Christian indeed: the more Spiritual the Ordinances are, the more doth a Gracious Heart delight in them.

2. When the Word comes close to the Conscience, rips up the Heart, and discovers sin, and yet the Soul delights in it notwithstanding, this is a sign of *Grace.*

3. When delight arises from that Communion that is to be had with God there. This is from a Principle of Grace in the Soul.

But there may be a delight in the Word where there is no Grace.

1. There are many delight in the Word because of the Eloquence of the Preacher, they delight not so much in the truths delivered, as in the dress they are delivered in. Thus it is said of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that

Ezek. 33. 32. he was to them *as a very lovely Song of one that hath a pleasant voice.*

2. There are very many delight to hear the word, that yet take no delight to do it. So saith God of them, in *Ezekiel* 33. 31.

Ezek. 33. 22. *They delight to hear my words, but they do them not.*

Now then, if a man may delight in the word, more becauſe of the Eloquence of the Preacher, than becauſe of the ſpiritualneſs of the matter; if he may delight to hear the Word, and yet not delight to do it: then he may delight in the word, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

8. *A man may be a Member of the Church of Chriſt, he may joyn himſelf to the people of God, partake with them in all Ordinances; and ſhare of all Church priviledges, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

So the *five fooliſh Virgins* joyned themſelves to the wiſe, and walked together.

Many may be Members of the Church of Chriſt, and yet not Members of *Chriſt* the Head of the Church.

There was a mixed multitude came up with the Church of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, they joyned themſelves to the *Iſraelites*, owned their God, left their own Countrey, and yet in heart *Egyptians* notwithſtanding.

All are not Iſrael, that are of Iſrael, Rom. 9. 6.

The Church in all Ages hath had unſound Members: *Cain* had Communion with *Abel*, *Iſhmael* dwelt in the ſame houſe with *Iſaac*, *Judas* was in fellowſhip with the Apoſtles, and ſo was *Demas* with the reſt of the Diſciples.

There will be ſome Bran in the fineſt Meal: the Draw-net of the Goſpel catches bad fiſh as well as good, the Tares and the Wheat grow together, and it will be ſo till the harveſt.

God hath a Church where there are no Members but ſuch as are true Members of

Christ, but it is in Heaven, it is the *Church*
Heb. 12.23. *of the first-born*; there are no Hypocrites, nor rotten, unsound Professors, none but the
Mat. 3. 12. *Spirits of just men made perfect*, all is pure Wheat that God layeth up in that Garner; there the Chaff is separated to unquenchable fire.

But in the Church on Earth the Wheat and the Chaff lie in the same heap together, the *Samaritans* will be near of kin to the *Jews* when they are in Prosperity, so while the Church of God flourisheth in the World, many will joyn to it; they will seem *Jews*, though they are *Samaritans*, and seem Saints, though yet they are no better than *almost Christians*.

9. *A man may have great hopes of Heaven, great hopes of being saved, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

Indeed there is a hope of Heaven which
Heb. 6. 19. is *the Anchor of the Soul sure and steadfast*, it never miscarries, and it is known by four properties.

First, It is a hope which purifies the heart, purges out sin, 1 *John* 3. 3. *He that hath this hope, purifies himself even as God is pure.* That soul that truly hopes to enjoy God, truly endeavours to be like God.

Secondly, It is a hope which fills the heart
Rom. 5. 2. with gladness: *We rejoyce in hope of the glory*
Psal. 130. 5. *of God.*

Thirdly, It is a hope that is founded upon the Promise: As there can be no true Faith without a Promise, so, nor any true hope: Faith applies the Promise, and Hope expects the fulfilling the Promise; Faith relies upon the Truth of it, and Hope waits for the good of

of it; Faith gives intereſt, hope expects livery and ſeiſin.

Fourthly, It is a hope that is wrought by God himſelf in the Soul; who is therefore called, *The God of Hope*, as being the *Author* as well as the *Object* of hope. Now he that hath this hope ſhall never miſcarry: This is a right hope; the hope of the true Believer, *Chriſt in you the hope of Glory.* Rom. 15. 13. Col. 1. 27.

But then, as there is a true and ſound hope, ſo there is a falſe and rotten hope; and this is much more common, as baſtard-pearls are more frequently worn than true Pearls.

There is nothing more common, than to ſee men big with groundleſs hopes of Heaven: As,

1. A man may have great hope that hath no grace; you read of the hope of Hypocrites, *Job* 8. 13, 14.

The Performance of Duties *is a proof* of their hope; the fooliſh Virgins would never have done what they did, had they thought they ſhould have been ſhut out after all.

Many Profeſſors would not be at ſuch pains in duties as they are, if they did not hope for Heaven. Hope is the great motive to action; deſpair cuts the ſinews of all endeavours; that is one reaſon why the damned in hell ceaſe acting toward an alteration of their ſtate, becauſe deſpair hath taken hold of them; if there were any hope in hell, they would up and be doing there. So that there may be great hope where there is no Grace; experience proves this, formal Profeſſors are men of no Grace, but yet men of great hopes; nay, many times you

ſhall find that none fear more about their eternal condition, than they that have moſt cauſe of hope; and none hope more, than they that have moſt cauſe of fear. As intereſt in God may ſometimes be without hope, ſo hope in God may be without Intereſt.

2. A man may hope in the mercy, and goodneſs, and power of God, without eying the Promiſe, and this is the hope of moſt; God is full of Mercy and Goodneſs, and therefore willing to ſave; and he is infinite in power, and therefore able to ſave; why therefore ſhould I not reſt on him?

Now it is preſumption, and therefore ſin, to hope in the mercy of God, otherwiſe than by eying the Promiſe; for the Promiſe is the channel of Mercy, the Pipe through which it is conveyed; all the bleſſedneſs the Saints enjoy in Heaven, is no other than what is the fruit of the promiſe relyed on, and hoped for here on earth. A man hath no warrant to hope in God, but by virtue of the Promiſe.

3. A man may hope for Heaven, and yet not cleanſe his heart, nor depart from his ſecret ſins; that hope of Salvation that is not accompanied with heart-purification, that is a vain *hope*.

4. A man may hope for Heaven, and yet be doing the work of Hell; he may hope for Salvation, and yet be working out his own damnation, and ſo periſh in his confidences: This is the caſe of many, *Malt agendo ſperant, & ſperando pereunt*; like the Water-man that looks one way, and rows another; many have their eyes on Heaven, whoſe

whose hearts are in the earth; they hope in God, but chuse him not for a portion; they hope in God, but do not love him as the best good, and therefore are like to have no portion in him, nor good by him; but are like to perish without him, notwithstanding all their hopes, *Job* 27. 8. *What is the hope of the hypocrite; though he hath gained, when God takes away his Soul?*

Now then, if a man may have great hope of Heaven, that hath no grace; if he may hope in mercy, without eying the promise; if he may hope without heart-purifying: if he may hope for Heaven, and yet do the work of Hell; surely then a man may have great hopes of Heaven, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

10. *A man may be under great and visible changes, and these wrought by the Ministry of the Word, and yet be but almost a Christian, as* Herod was, it is said when *he heard* John Baptist, *he did many things and heard him gladly.* *Saul* was under a great change when he met the Lords Prophets, he turned Prophet too. Mat. 6. 20.

Nay, it is said, *ver.* 9. of that 1 *Sam.* 10. *that God gave him another heart.* 1 Sam. 10. 10

Now was not this a work of Grace? and was not *Saul* here truely converted? one would think he was, but yet indeed he was not.

For though it is said, God gave him *another heart*, yet it is not said, that God gave him a *new heart.*

There is a great difference between לב אחר (*lebh acher*) another heart, לב חדש (*lebh chadash*) a new heart; God gave

him another heart to fit him for a Ruler, but gave him not a *new heart* to make him a Believer, another heart may make another man, but it is a *new heart* that makes a new man.

Again, *Simon Magus* is a great proof of this truth: he was under a great and visible change: of a *Sorcerer* he was turned to be a *Believer*, he left his Witchcrafts and Sorceries, and embraced the *Gospel*, was not this a great change?

If the Drunkard doth but leave his Drunkenness, the Swearer his Oaths, the Prophane person his Prophaneness, they think this is a gracious change, and their state is now good: alas, *Simon Magus* did not only leave his sins, but had a kind of Conversion; for *he believed and was Baptized.*

Acts 8. 13.

Object. *But is not that man that is changed, a true Christian?*

Sal. Not every change makes a man a Christian, indeed there is a change, that whoever is under it, he is a true Christian.

When a mans heart is so changed, as that it is renewed: when old things *are done away, and all is become new*; when the καινὴ κτίσις, the new creature is wrought in the Soul, when a man is *turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God*; when the mind is enlightened, the will renewed, the affections made heavenly, then a man is a Christian indeed.

2 Cor. 5. 17.

Acts 26. 18.

But now you must know, that every change is not this change; For,

1. There is a civil change, a moral change, as well as a spiritual and supernatural change.

Many

Many men are changed in a moral ſenſe, and one may ſay, they are become *new men*, but they are in heart and nature the ſame men ſtill; they are not changed in a ſpiritual and ſupernatural ſenſe, and therefore it cannot be ſaid of them, they are become *new Creatures.*

Reſtraining Grace may cauſe a moral change; but it is renewing grace that muſt cauſe a ſaving change. Now many are under reſtraining Grace, and ſo changed morally, that are not under the power of renewing Grace, and ſo changed ſavingly.

2. There is an outward change, as well as an inward change; the outward change is often without the inward, though the inward change is never without the outward. A mans heart cannot be ſanctified, but it will influence the life, but a mans life may be reformed, and yet never affect or influence the heart.

3. A man may be converted from a courſe of Profaneneſs to a form of Godlineſs; from a filthy converſation to a fair profeſſion, and yet the heart the ſame, in one and the other. A rotten Poſt may be gilt without, and yet unſound within. *Hypocrita in verbis ſanctus, in corde vanus; intus Nero, foris Cato. Audi, nemo melius; ſpecta nemo pejus.*

It is common to have the outſide of the Cup and Platter made clean, and yet the inſide foul and filthy. Mat. 23. 25.

Now then; if a man may be changed morally, and yet not ſpiritually, outwardly, and yet not inwardly, from a courſe of Profaneneſs, to a lifeleſs form of Godlineſs;

then a man may be under great and viſible changes, and yet be no more than *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

I do not ſpeak this to diſcountenance any change, ſhort of that that is ſpiritual; but to awaken you to ſeek after that change which is more than moral. It is good to be outwardly reformed, but it is better to be ſavingly renewed.

I know how natural it is for men to take up with any thing like a work of converſion, though it be not converſion, and reſting in that, they eternally periſh.

Beloved, let me tell you, there is no change, no converſion can ſtead your Souls in the day of Judgment, on this ſide that ſaving work, which is wrought on the ſoul by the Spirit of God, renewing you throughout; the ſober man without this change, ſhall as ſurely go to Hell, as the fooliſh drunkard.

1. Theſ. 5. 23.

Morality and Civility may commend us to men, but not to God. They are of no value in the procurement of an Eternal Salvation.

A man may go far in an outward change, and yet not be one ſtep nearer Heaven, than he that never was under any change; nay, he may be (in ſome ſenſe) further off; as Chriſt ſaith, *The Scribes and Phariſees were further from Heaven*, with all their ſhew of Godlineſs, than *Publicans* and *Harlots* in all their ſin and uncleanneſs. Becaute reſting in a falſe work, a partial change, we neglect to ſeek after a true and ſaving change. There is nothing more common, than to miſtake our ſtate, and by overweening thoughts

Mat. 21. 31.

miſ-

misjudge our condition, and to perish in our own delusions.

The *World* is full of these *foolish Builders*, that lay the *Foundation* of their *hopes* of *Eternal Salvation upon the Sand.* Mat. 7. 26.

Now my Brethren, would you not mistake the way to Heaven, and perish in a delusion? would you not be found fools at last? for none are such fools as the spiritual fool, who is a fool in the *great* business of *Salvation*. Would you not be fools for your Souls, and for Eternity? O then labour after, and pray for a thorough *work* of *Conversion*, begg of God that he would make a *saving change* in your *Souls*, that *you may be altogether Christians*; all other changes below this *saving change*, this *heart-change*, make us but *almost Christians.*

11. *A man may be very zealous in the matters of Religion, and yet be but almost a Christian: Jehu* did not only serve God, and do what he commandeded him, but was very zealous in his service, 2 *King.* 10. 16. *Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts*; and yet in all this *Jehu* was a very Hypocrite. *Joash* was a great reformer in *Jehojadah's* time; it is said, *He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, all the dayes of* Jehojadah *the Priest*, but when *Jehojadah* dyed, *Joash* his zeal for God dyed with him, and he becomes a very wretch. 2 Chron. 29. 2. v. 17, 18.

But the Apostle makes zeal to be a note of sound Christianity, *Gal.* 4. 18. *It is good to be zealously affected in good things*; nay, it seems to be the non-such qualification for obtaining Eternal Life, *The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* Mat. 11. 12. Object.

It

Sol. It is true, there is a Zeal which is good, and which renders the Soul highly acceptable to God, a Zeal that never misses of Heaven and Salvation.

Now this is a Zeal which is a cœlestial fire, the true temper and heat of all the affections to God and Christ; *qui non zelat, non amat.* It is a Zeal wrought, and kindled in the soul by the Spirit of God, who first works it, and then sets it on work. It is a Zeal that hath the Word of God for its guide, directing it in working, both in regard of its object and end, manner and measure. It is a Zeal that checks sin, and forwards the Heavenly Life. It is a zeal that makes the glory of God its chief end, which swallows up all by-ends? *The Zeal of thy house*
Joh. 2. 17. *hath eaten me up.*

But now all Zeal is not this kind of Zeal; there is a false Zeal, as well as a true; every grace hath its counterfeit; as there is fire, which is true Heavenly fire on the Altar, so
Lev. 10. 1. there is strange fire: *Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire upon Gods Altar.*

There are several kinds of Zeal, none of which are true and sound, but false and counterfeit.

I'le instance in eight particulars:

First, *There is a blind Zeal*, a Zeal without knowledge, *Rom.* 10. 2. *They have a Zeal* (saith the Apostle) *but not according to knowledge?* Now as knowledge without Zeal is fruitless, so zeal without knowledge is dan-
Mat. 17. 15. gerous, it is like wild-fire in the hand of a fool, or like the Devil in the man possess'd, that threw him sometimes into the fire, some-
Bernard. times into the water; *Zelus absque scientia,*

quo-

quo vehementius irruit, eo gravius corruit.

The eye is the light of the body, and the underſtanding is the light of the Soul. now as the body without the light of the eye, cannot go without ſtumbling, ſo the Soul without the light of the mind, cannot act without erring.

Zeal without knowledge, is like an *ignis fatuus* in a dark night, that leads a Traveller out of his way, into the Bogs and Mire. This was the zeal of *Paul*, while he was a *Phariſee*; *I was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day, and I perſecuted this way unto the death.* And ſo *Acts* 26. 9. *I verily thought with my ſelf, I ought to do many things contrary to the name of* Jeſus *of* Nazareth: So *Phil* 3. 6. *Concerning Zeal perſecuting the Church.* Acts 22.3,4.

Such a zeal was that in *Joh.* 16. 2. *They ſhall put you out of the Synagogue* (ſilence you, you ſhall not be ſuffered to Preach) *yea the time comes, that whoever kills you, will think that he doeth God ſervice.* This is great zeal, but yet it is blind zeal, and that God abhors.

Secondly, *There is a partial zeal*; in one thing fire-hot, in another key-cold; zealous in this thing, and yet careleſs in another; Many are firſt-Table Chriſtians, zealous in the duties of the firſt Table, and yet neglect the ſecond: thus the *Phariſees* were zealous in their *Corban* *, and yet unnatural to their Parents, ſuffering them to ſtarve and periſh. Others are ſecond-Table Chriſtians, zealous in the duties of the ſecond Table, but neglect the firſt; more for Righteouſneſs among men, than for Holineſs towards

* Mat. 23. 23. *Lyra* hath theſe very words, *Filius per profeſſionem factam in religione excuſatura ſubveniendo parentibus.*

towards God. But now he whoſe Religion ends with the firſt Table, or begins with the ſecond, he is a fool in his profeſſion, for he is but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

The Woman that was for the dividing the Child, was not the true Mother; and he that is for dividing the Commands, is not a true Believer.

2 Kin. 10. 16. compared with ver. 29. *Jehu* was zealous againſt *Ahabs* houſe, but not ſo againſt *Jeroboams Calves*; many are zealous againſt ſin of opinion, that yet uſe no zeal againſt the ſins of their Converſation.

Now as we know that the ſweat of the whole body is a ſign of health, but the ſweat of ſome one part only ſhews a diſtemper, and therefore Phyſicians do reckon ſuch a heat to be ſymptomat cal.

Jo. Fernel. de Febribus, l. 4. C. 14.

So where zeal reaches to every Command of God alike, that is a ſign of a ſound Conſtitution of Soul; but where it is partial, where a man is hot in one part, and cold in another; that is ſymptomatical of ſome inward ſpiritual diſtemper.

Thirdly, *There is a miſplaced zeal*, fixed upon unſuitable and diſproportionable Objects; Many are very zealous in trifling things that are not worth it, and trifle in the things that moſt require it; like the *Phariſees* that were diligent Tythers of *Mint*, *Aniſe* and *Cummin*, but neglected the τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου, the *weighter matters of the Law*, *Judgment*, *Mercy* and *Faith*. They had no zeal for theſe, though very hot for the other; many are more zealous for a Ceremony, than for the ſubſtance of Religion; more zealous for bowing at the Name of Jeſus,

Mat. 23. 23.

ſus, than for Conformity to the life of Jeſus; more zealous for a holy veſtment than for a holy life; more zealous for the inventions of men, than for the inſtitutions of Chriſt.

This is a ſuperſtitious Zeal, and uſually found in men unconverted, whom Grace never was wrought in: When was it that *Paul* was ſo *exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his Fathers*, as he ſaith, *Gal.* 1. 14. but only when he was in his wretched and unconverted ſtate? as you may ſee in the next verſes; *But when it pleaſed God to call me by his Grace, then I conferred not with fleſh and blood*: *Paul* had another kind of Zeal then, acted by other kind of Principles.

Heathens will riſe up in judgment againſt ſuch men. *Deus non ſuperſtitione colit vult, ſed pietate*, ſaid *Cicero*. Gal. 1. 15, 16.

Fourthly, *There is a ſelfiſh Zeal*, that hath a mans own ends for its motive; *Jehu* was very zealous, but it was not ſo much for God, as for the Kingdom; not ſo much in obedience to the command, as in deſign to ſtep into the Throne; and therefore God threatens to Puniſh him for that very thing he commands him to do, *Hoſ.* 1. 4. *I will avenge the blood of* Jezreel *upon the houſe of* Jehu: Becauſe he ſhed that blood to gratifie his luſt, not to obey God. So *Simeon* and *Levi* pretend great zeal for Circumciſion, ſeem very zealous for the honour of Gods Ordinances, when in truth their Zeal was for Covetouſneſs, and revenge upon the *Sechemites*.

Gen. 34. 14, 15. comp. with *v.* 25, 26, 27, 28, 29. *Ne appetat quiſquam ultra videri quam eſt ut poſſit ultra eſſe quam videtur.*

Fifthly, *There is an outſide Zeal*, ſuch was that of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, they would not eat with unwaſhed hands, but yet would live in unſeen ſins; they would waſh the Cup often, but the heart ſeldom; paint the

out-

out-side, but neglect the in-side: *Jehu* was a mighty out-side reformer, 2 *Kings* 10. 16. But he reformed nothing within, for he had a base heart under all, *v.* 31. *Jehu took no heed to walk in the Law of the Lord with all his heart.* Though his fleece was fair, his Liver was rotten.

Our Lord Christ observes of the *Pharisees*, *They pray to be seen of men*; and fast so, *that they may appear to men to fast*, Mat. 6. 5, 16.

Sixthly, *There is a forensick Zeal*, that runs out upon others, like the Candle in the lanthorn, that sends all the heat out of the top; or as the lewd Woman *Solomon* mentions, Prov. 7. 11. whose *feet abides not in her own house.*

Many are hot and high against the sins of others, and yet cannot see the same in themselves; like the *Lamiæ*, that put on their spectacles when they went abroad, but pulled them off within doors.

Tecum habita.

It is easie to see faults in others, and as hard to see them in our selves. *Jehu* was zealous against *Baal* and his Priests, because that was *Ahab*'s sin; but not against the Calves of *Bethel*, because that was his own sin. This zeal is the true Character of an Hypocrite; his own Garden is over-run with Weeds, while he is busie in looking over his Neighbours Pale.

Seventhly, *There is a sinful Zeal*; all the former may be called sinful from some defect; but this I call sinful in a more special notion, because against the life and chief of Religion; it is a zeal against zeal, that flies not at Prophaneness, but at the very power of Godliness; not at Error, but at Truth,

Truth, and is moſt hot againſt the moſt ſpiritual and important Truths of the Times. Whence elſe are the Sufferings of Men for the Truth, but from the Spirit of Zeal againſt the Truth? This may be called a deviliſh Zeal; for as there is the Faith of Devils, ſo there is the Zeal of Devils; *Therefore his rage is great, becauſe he knows his time is ſhort.* Jam. 2. 19. Rev. 12. 12.

8. There is a *Scriptureleſs Zeal*, that is not butted and bounded by the Word, but by ſome baſe and low end; Such was *Saul's* Zeal, when God bids him deſtroy *Amalek, and ſpare neither Man nor Beaſt*; then, contrary to Gods Command, he ſpares the beſt of the *Sheep and Oxen* under pretence of *Zeal for God's Sacrifice.* 1Sam. 15. 3.

Another time, when he had no ſuch command, then he ſlays the *Gibeonites in zeal to the Children of* Iſrael *and* Judah. 2 Sam. 21. 2.

Many a mans Zeal is greater then and there when and where he hath the leaſt warrant from God.

The true Spirit of Zeal is bounded by Scripture; for it is for God, and the concernment of his Glory: God hath no Glory from that Zeal that hath no Scripture warrant.

Now then, if the Zeal of a Man in the things of God may be only a blind Zeal, or a partial Zeal, or a miſplaced Zeal, or a ſelfiſh Zeal, or an out-ſide Zeal, or a forenſick Zeal, or a ſinful Zeal, or a Scriptureleſs Zeal, then it is evident that a man may be very zealous in the matters of Religion, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Mat. 12.13. 12. *A man may be much in Prayer, he may pray often, and pray much, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

So did the *Phariſees*, whom yet our Lord Chriſt rejects for Hypocrites.

Object. But is not a praying-frame an argument of a ſincere heart? are not the Saints of God called, *The generation of them that ſeek the face of God?* Pſal. 24. 6.

Sol. A man is not therefore a Chriſtian, becauſe he is much in Prayer. I grant

That thoſe Prayers that are from the workings and ſighings of Gods Spirit in us; from ſincere hearts lifted up to God; from a ſenſe of our own emptineſs, and Gods infinite fulneſs; That are ſuited to Gods will the great ruſe of Prayer.

That are for ſpiritual things, more than temporal.

That are accompanied with Faith and Dependance; Such Prayers ſpeak a man *altogether a Chriſtian.* But now a man may be much in Prayer, and yet be a ſtranger to ſuch Prayer; As,

1. Nature may put a man upon prayer, for it is a part of natural worſhip; it may put a Child of God upon prayer; ſo did Chriſt, *Mat.* 26. 39, 42. *He went and fell on his face and prayed, ſaying, O my Father, if it be poſſible, let this Cup paſs from me.* This was a Prayer of Chriſt, which flowed from the ſinleſs ſtrugglings of Nature, ſeeking its own preſervation.

2. A man may pray in pretence, for a covering to ſome ſin: ſo did thoſe devout *Phariſees*, Matth. 23. 14. *Wo to you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites, for ye devour Widows*

dows houſes, and for a pretence make long prayers, therefore ye ſhall receive the greater damnation. So the *Papiſts* ſeem very devout to pray a rich mans Soul out of Purgatory, but it is to cheat the Heir of much of his Eſtate, under pretence of praying for his Fathers Soul.

3. A man may pray, and yet love ſin, as *Auſtin*, before *Converſion* pray'd againſt his *ſin*, but was afraid *God* ſhould hear him, and take him at his word. Now God hears not ſuch prayers, *Pſal.* 66. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer.*

4. A man may pray much for temporal things, and little for ſpiritual things; and ſuch are the prayers of moſt men, crying out moſt for temporal things: More for, *Who will ſhew us any good?* than for, *Lord, lift upon us the light of thy Countenance.* Pſal. 4. 6. *David* copies out the prayer of ſuch, *Pſalm* 144. 12, *&c. That our Sons may be as plants,* and 144. 12, *and that our Daughters may be as corner-ſtones* to 16. *poliſhed after the ſimilitude of a palace: That our Garners may be full,* &c. *Happy is the people that is in ſuch a caſe.* This is the carnal hearts prayer, and this *David* calls Vanity, *ver.* 11. *They are ſtrange Children, whoſe mouth ſpeaketh Vanity.*

5. A man may pray, and yet be far from God in prayer. *This people draw nigh to me* Iſa. 29. 13. *with their mouth, and honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me,* Matth. 15. 8. A man may pray, and yet have no heart in prayer, and that God chiefly looks at; *My Son, give me thy heart.* Pro. 23. 26.

The

The *Jews* have this sentence written upon the walls of their Synagogues, *Prayer without the intention of the mind, is but a body without a Soul.*

It is not enough to be conscionable, to use Prayer, but we must be conscionable to the use of Prayer. Many are so conscientious, that they dare not but pray; and yet so irreligious, that they have no heart in Prayer; a common work of God may make a man conscionable to do duties, but nothing less than saving grace in the heart will make a man conscionable in the doing of them.

Psal. 78. 34. Some derive the Latin *colo*, to worship, from the Greek κολακεύειν *to flatter*, and the English word *flatter*, from the Greek word λατρεύειν *to worship.*

6. A mans Prayer may be a lie; as a profession without sanctity, is a lie to the World; so prayer without sincerity, is a lye to God. It is said of *Israel*, that they *sought God, and enquired early after him*: They were much in Prayer, and God calls all but a lye. *Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lyed to him with their tongues, for their heart was not with him*, ver. 36, 37.

Hearken to my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips, saith *David*, Psal. 87. 1.

7. Afflictions and the *pressures* of outward evils, will make a man pray, and pray much, *Psal.* 78. 34. *When he slew them, then they sought him, and returned, and enquired early after God.* The Heathen Mariners call every man upon his God when in a storm: when they fear drowning, then they fall to praying, *Jon.* 1. 5. Mariners are for the most part none of the devoutest, nor much addicted to prayer: they will swear twice, where they pray once, and yet it is said,

Nuper me amici cujusdam languor admonuit optimos esse nos dum infirmi sumus, Plin. Ep. l. 7. *Qui nescit orare, discat navigare.*

That

They cry to the Lord in their Trouble, Psal. 107. 23, 28. and hence you have a Proverb, *He that cannot pray, let him go to Sea.*

They poured out a Prayer when thy chastening was upon them, Isa. 26. 16.

Now then, if nature may put a man upon Prayer, if a man may pray in pretence, and design, if a man may pray, and yet love sin, if a man may pray mostly for temporal things, if a man may pray, and yet be far from God in Prayer, if Prayer may be a lye, or it may be only the cry of the soul under affliction; sure then a man may be much in Prayer, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

But suppose a man pray, and prevail with God in Prayer, surely that is a witness from Heaven of a mans sincerity in Prayer: now I pray, and prevail, I ask, and am answered. *Object.*

A man may pray, and be answered, for God many times answers Prayers in Judgment: As God is sometimes silent in mercy, so he speaks in wrath; and as he sometimes denies Prayer in mercy, so he sometimes answers in Judgment, when men are over-importunate in something their Lusts are upon, and will take no nay, then God answers in Judgment, *Psal.* 78. 29. *He gave them their own desire:* They had desired Quails, and God sends them: But now mark the judgment, verse 30, 31. *While the meat was in their Mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew them.* *Sol.*

But suppose a mans affections are much stirred in Prayer, how then? is not that a true note of Christianity? Now my affections are much stirred in Prayer. *Object.*

So

So was *Eſau*'s when he ſought the Bleſſing; *He ſought it carefully with tears.* A man may be affected with his own Parts in a Duty, while good notions paſs through his Head, and good words through his lips, ſome good motions alſo may ſtir in his Heart, but they are but ſparks which fly out at the Tunnel of the Chimney, which ſuddenly vaniſh; ſo that it is poſſible a man may pray and prevail in Prayer; pray, and be affected in Prayer, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Heb. 12.17.

13. *A man may ſuffer for Chriſt in his Goods, in his Name, in his Perſon,* and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Every man that bears Chriſts Croſs on his ſhoulders, doth not therefore bear Chriſt's Image in his Soul.

Object. But doth not our Lord Chriſt make great promiſes to them that ſuffer, or loſe any thing for him? Doth not he ſay, *Mat.* 19. 29. *Every one that hath forſaken houſes, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or Children, or lands for my Names ſake, ſhall receive an hundred fold, and ſhall inherit everlaſting life?* Sure they are true Chriſtians whom Chriſt makes this promiſe to.

Mat. 19 29.

Sol. There is a ſuffering for Chriſt, that is a note of Sincerity, and ſhall have its reward.

Mat. 5. 10, 11, 12.

That is, when a Man ſuffers for a good cauſe, upon a good call, and with a good conſcience, for Chriſt's ſake, and in Chriſt's *ſtrength*; when his ſufferings are a filling up *that which is behind of the Sufferings of Chriſt*; when a man ſuffers as a Chriſtian, as the Apoſtle hath it, 1 *Pet.* 4. 6. *If a man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed*;

Col. 1. 24.

when

when a man thruſts not himſelf into ſufferings, but ſtays Gods call, ſuch ſuffering is a proof of Integrity. Mar. 14.28, 29.

But now every ſuffering for Chriſt is not ſuffering as a Chriſtian: For,

1. A Man may ſuffer for Chriſt, for that profeſſion of Religion that is upon him; the World hates the ſhew of Religion; times may come, that it may coſt a man as dear to wear the Livery of Chriſt, as to wear Chriſt himſelf. *Alexander* had like to have loſt his life for the Goſpels ſake, *Act.* 19. 33. yet he was that *Alexander* (as is generally judged) that afterward made Shipwrack of *Faith*, and greatly oppoſed *Pauls* Miniſtry. 1 Tim.. 119, 20, & 4.14.

2. A man may ſuffer for Chriſt, and yet have no true love to Chriſt. This is ſuppoſed in 1 *Cor.* 13. 3. *Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits nothing.*

Love to Chriſt is the only noble ground of ſuffering, but a Man may ſuffer much upon other ends.

1. Out of opinion of meriting by our ſuffering, as the Papiſts: Or,

2. Out of vain-glory, or for applauſe among Profeſſors; ſome have dyed that their Names might live: Or, *Vicit amor patriæ, laudiſq; immenſa cupido.*

3. Out of a *Roman* Reſolution, or ſtoutneſs of Spirit.

4. Out of a deſign of profit, as *Judas* forſook all for Chriſt, hoping to mend his Market by cloſing with him: Or,

5. Rather to maintain an Opinion, than for Truth's propagation. *Socrates* dyed for maintaining that there was but one God; but whether he dyed rather for his own opinion,

nion, than for Gods sake; I think it is no hard matter to determine. Thus a man may suffer for professing Christ, and yet suffer upon wrong Principles.

Now then, if a Man may suffer for *Christ* from the Profession that is upon him, or suffer for *Christ*, and yet not truly love him; then a man may suffer for Christ, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

14. *A man may be called of God, and embrace this call, and yet be but almost a Christian.* *Judas* is a famous Instance of this truth; he was called by Christ himself, and came at the call of Christ, and yet *Judas* was but *almost a Christian.*

Object. But is not the being under the call of God, a proof of our interest in the predestinating love of God? doth not the Apostle say, *whom he predestinated, them he called?* Rom. 8. 30. Nay, doth he not say in the next Verse, *whom he called, them he justified?* Nay, doth not God call all whom he intends to save?

Sol. Though God calleth all those that shall be saved, yet all shall not be saved whom God calleth: Every Man under the Gospel is called of God in one sense or other, but yet every man under the Gospel shall not there-
Mat. 20. 16. fore be saved. *For many are called, but few chosen.*

There is a two-fold call of God. { Internal, External.

1. There is an Internal call of God; Now this call is a special work of the Spirit by the Ministry of the Word, whereby a man is brought out of a state of Nature, into a state of Grace, *out of darkness into light,* from

from being *vessels of wrath*, to be made *heirs of life*. Act. 26. 18.

I grant, that whoever is under this call of God, is called effectually and savingly, called to be a Christian indeed. *Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father, comes to me.* Joh. 6. 45.

2. There is a call of God which a man may have, and yet not be this call; there is an External call of God, which is by the Ministry of the word.

Now every man that lives under the preaching of the Gospel, is thus called; God calls every soul of you to repent and lay a sure foundation for Heaven and Salvation, by the word you hear this day. Mat. 22. 9.

But now every man that is thus called, is not therefore a Christian: For,

1. Many under the call of God, come to Christ, but are not Converted to Christ, have nothing of the Grace and Life of Christ, such as he, *Mat.* 22. who when Christ sent out his servants to bid guests unto the Marriage, came in at the call of Christ, but yet *had not on the wedding Garment*, ver. 11. that is, had none of the Grace and Righteousness of Jesus Christ.

2. Many that are under the call of the Gospel, come to Christ, and yet afterwards fall away from Christ; as *Judas* and *Demas* did; It is said when Christ Preached a Doctrine that his Disciples did not like, that *from that time many of his Disciples went back, and walked no more with him.* 2 Tim. 4. 10. Joh. 6. 66.

Now then, if many are under this External call of God only, if many that come to Christ, are not converted to Christ, but

fall away from Christ; then a man may be called of God, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

15. *A man may have the Spirit of God, and yet be but almost a Christian.* Balaam had the Spirit of God given him when he blessed *Israel*, Numb. 24. 2. *Balaam saw Israel abiding in Tents, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him: Judas* had, for by the Spirit he cast out Devils, he was one of them that came to Christ, and said, *Lord, even the Devils are subject to us: Saul* had, 1 *Sam.* 10. 10. *Behold a company of Prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he Prophesyed among them.*

Object. But you'l say, *Can a man have the Spirit of God, and yet not be a Christian?* Indeed the Rom. 8. 9. Scripture saith, *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*; but surely if any man have the Spirit of Christ, he is his.

Sol. There is a having the Spirit, which is a sure mark of Sainthip. Where the Spirit is an effectual prevailing Principle of Grace and Sanctification, renewing and regenerating the heart: Where the Spirit is as a potent worker, *helping the Souls infirmities*, Rom. 8. 26. Joh. 14. 16. where the Spirit is so as to *abide for ever*. But now every man that hath the spirit hath not the Spirit in this manner: For,

1. A man may have the Spirit only transiently, not abidingly; the Spirit may be in a man, and yet not dwell in a man; the Spirit is wherever he dwells; but he doth not dwell wherever he is; he is in all, but dwells in Saints only; he is in all *per divinitatis præsentiam*, but dwells in Saints only *per inhabitationis gratiam*: The Hypocrite may *Lamb.* 1. *Sent. dist.* 17.

ave the Spirit for a ſeaſon, but not to abide
him for ever.

2. A man may have *the Spirit*, and yet
ot be born of *the Spirit*: Every true Chriſti-
n is born of *the Spirit*; an Hypocrite may
ave the Gifts of the Spirit, but not the Gra-
es; the Spirit may be in him by the way
f *Illumination*, but not by way of *Sanctifi-*
ation; by way of *Conviction*, but not by
ay of *Converſion*: Though he may have
uch common Grace for the good of others,
et he may have no ſpecial Grace for the
ood of himſelf; though his Profeſſion be
iritual, yet is his ſtate and condition car-
al.

3. A man may have the Spirit only as a
pirit of Bondage: Thus many have the Spi-
t working only to Bondage. *The Spirit of Bon-*
age is an operation of the Holy Ghoſt by the Law,
convincing the Conſcience of Sin, and of the Curſe
of the Law, and working in the Soul ſuch an ap-
rehenſion of the wrath of God, as makes the
houghts of God a terror to him.

This Spirit may be, and often is without
ving Grace; this Operation of the Spirit
as in *Cain* and *Judas*.

Though none that receive the Spirit of
doption, but they firſt receive the Spirit of
Bondage; yet many receive the Spirit of *Bon-*
dage, that never receive the Spirit of *Adop-*
ion.

4. A man may have the Spirit of God
working in him, and yet it may be reſiſted
by him: It is ſaid of the *Jews*, *They re-*
belled and vexed his holy Spirit; and the
ame Sin is charged upon their Children,
Acts 7. 51. *Ye ſtiff-necked, and uncircumciſed*

in heart, ye have alwayes resisted the holy Ghost; as your Fathers did, so do ye. The Hypocrite retains not the Spirit so long as to come up to Regeneration and Adoption, but quenches the Motions of it, and thereby miscarries Eternally.

5. A man may have the Spirit, and yet sin that unpardonable Sin: He may have the Holy Ghost, and yet sin the Sin against the Holy Ghost; nay, no man can sin this Sin against it, but he that hath some degree of it.

The true Believer hath so much of the Spirit, such a work of it in him, that he cannot sin that Sin: *He that is born of God sins not*; to wit, *that Sin unto Death*, for that is meant, 1 *John* 5. 16, 17, 18. The carnal Professed Sinner, he cannot sin that Sin, because he is carnal and sensual, having not the *Spirit*. A man must have some measure of the Spirit that sins this Sin; so hath the Hypocrite; he is said to be *Partaker of the Holy Ghost*, Heb. 6. 4. And he only is capable of sinning the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Jude 19.

Now then, if a man may have the Spirit transiently only, not abidingly; If a man may have the Spirit, and yet not be born of the Spirit; If he may have the Spirit only as a Spirit of Bondage; If a man may have the Spirit working in him, and yet it may be resisted by him; If a man may have the Spirit, and yet sin that unpardonable sin against it; Then surely a man may have the Spirit of God, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

16. *A*

16. *A man may have faith, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian: the ſtony ground* (that is, thoſe hearers ſet out by the ſtony-ground) *for a while believed.* It is ſaid, *John* 2. 23. *That many believed in the Name of Chriſt, yet Chriſt durſt not commit himſelf to them.* Though they truſted in Chriſt, yet Chriſt would not truſt them; and why? *becauſe he knew all men*, verſe 24. He knew they were rotten at root, notwithſtanding their faith; a man may have all Faith, to the removing of *Mountains*, and yet be *nothing*. Luk. 8. 13. *Fides minime fides; quippe ex miraculis nata.* 1 Cor. 13.

But how can this be, that a man may have faith, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian?* Doth not our Lord Chriſt promiſe Life Eternal and Salvation, to all that believe? Is not this the Goſpel that is to be Preached to every Creature, *He that believes, ſhall be ſaved?* Mark 16. 16. Object.

Though it is true what our Lord Chriſt ſaith, that *he that believes ſhall be ſaved*; yet is it as true, that many believe that ſhall never be ſaved; for *Simon Magus* believed; yea, *James* faith, *The Devils believe and tremble*: Now none will ſay, theſe ſhall be ſaved. Sol. Jam. 2. 19.

As it is true, what the Apoſtle ſaith, *All men have not faith*; So it is as true, that there are ſome men have faith, who are no whit the better for their faith. 2 Theſ. 3. 2.

You muſt know therefore there is a two-fold faith, { *Special and Saving.* / *Common and not Saving.*

1. There is a ſaving Faith.

This is called *Faith of the operation of God.* Col. 2. 10.

It is a work of Gods own Spirit in the Soul.

It is ſuch a faith as reſts and caſts th Soul wholly upon Chriſt for Grace and Gl ry, Pardon and Peace, Sanctification a Salvation.

It is an united act of the whole Soul, u derſtanding, will and affections, all concu ring to unite the Soul to an all-ſufficient R deemer.

Act. 15. 9. It is ſuch a faith as *purifies the heart*, a makes it clean, it influences and gives ſtreng and life to all other graces.

Now whoever hath this Faith, is a Chr Tit. 1. 1. ſtian indeed; this is the *Faith of Gods Elect* But then,

2. There is a common faith, not ſavin a fading and temporary Faith; There is th Act. 8. 13. compared with ver. 23. faith of *Simon Magus*, as well as the fait of *Simon Peter*, *Simon Magus* believed, a yet was in the *gall of bitterneſs, and in the bo of Iniquity.*

Now *Simon Magus* hath more followe than *Simon Peter*; the Faith of moſt me will at laſt be found to be no better than t Faith of *Simon Magus*: For,

Firſt, The Faith of moſt is but a *tem rary Faith*, it dures for a while, and the dyes and periſheth; true and ſaving Faith ſuch as is the *Faith of Gods Elect*, cannot dye; It may fail in the Act, but not in th Habit; The ſap may not be in the branch but it is alwayes in the root.

That Faith that periſheth, that Faith a man may have and periſh.

Secondly, There is a Faith that lies onl in generals, not in particulars; As there i a general and particular object of Faith, ſ there is a general and particular Faith. Th

general Object of Faith is the whole Scripture; the particular object of Faith is Christ in the Promise.

Now many have a general Faith to believe all the Scripture, and yet have no Faith to make a particular application of Jesus Christ in the Promise.

Devils and Reprobates may believe the truth of the Scripture, and what is written of the dying and suffering of Christ for Sinners; but there are but few that can close up themselves in the wounds of Christ, and by his Stripes fetch in healing to their own Souls.

Thirdly, There is a Faith that is seated in the Understanding, but not in the Will; this is a very common Faith; many assent to the Truth.

They believe all the Attributes of God, that he is just, holy, wise, faithful, good, merciful, &c. But yet they rest not on him notwithstanding.

They believe the Commands are true, but yet do not obey them: They believe the Promises are true, but yet do not embrace and apply them: They believe the Threatnings are true, but yet do not flee from them.

Thus their Faith lies in assent, but not consent; they have Faith to confess a Judgment, but none to take out Execution; by assent they lay a Foundation, but never build upon it by Application.

They believe that Christ dyed to save them that believe, and yet they believe not in Christ, that they may be saved.

O my Brethren, it is not a believing *Head*, but a believing *Heart* that makes a

Rom. 10. 10. 1 Cor. 1. 5. 17.

Christian; *with the Heart man believes to Righteousness*; without this our *faith is vain, we are yet in our Sins.*

Fourthly, There is a faith without experience; many believe the Word upon hearsay, to be the Word of God, but they never felt the Power and Virtue of it upon their Hearts and Consciences. Now what good is it to believe the Truth of the Word, if a mans Conscience never felt the Power of the Word? What is it to believe the Truth of the Promise, if we never tasted the sweetness of the Promise?

We are in this case, like a man that believes the description others make of strange Countries, but never travelled them to know the Truth: Or as a Patient that believes all the Physitian says, but yet tries none of his Potions. We believe the Word, because we cannot gainsay it; but yet we have no experience of any saving good wrought by the Word, and so are but *almost Christians.*

Fifthly, There is a Faith that is without brokenness of Heart, that doth not avail to melt or soften the Heart, and therefore is not true Faith; for the least true Faith is ever joyned with a bending Will, and broken Heart.

Sixthly, There is a Faith that transforms not the Heart; Faith without Fruit, that doth not bring forth the new Creature in the Soul, but leaves it in a state of Sin and Death.

This is a Faith that makes a man a sound Professor, but not a sound Believer; he believes the Truth, but not as it is in Jesus; for then it would change and transform him into

to the likeneſs of Jeſus. He believes that a man muſt be changed that would be ſaved, but yet is not ſavingly changed by believing. Thus while others believe to Salvation, he believes to damnation, for *his web ſhall not become a garment, neither ſhall he cover himſelf with his work.* Eph. 4. 21. Iſa. 56. 9.

Now then, if a mans faith may be but temporary, or may lie only in generals, or may be ſeated in the underſtanding only, or may be without experience, or may be without a broken heart, or without a new heart; ſurely then a man may have faith, he may *taſte of this heavenly gift*, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.* Heb. 6. 4.

17. A man may go further yet: He *may poſſibly have a love to the people of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*; Every kind of love to thoſe who are Saints, is not a proof of our Sainтſhip: *Pharaoh* loved *Joſeph*, and advanced him to the ſecond place in the Kingdom, and yet *Pharaoh* was but a wicked man: *Ahab* loved *Jehoſhaphat*, and made a league with him, and marryed his Daughter *Athaliah* to *Jehoram*, *Jehoſhapat*'s Son, and yet *Ahab* was a wicked wretch.

But you will ſay, this ſeems to contradict the Teſtimony of the Scriptures; For that makes love to the Saints and people of God, a ſure proof of our Regeneration, and intereſt in Life Eternal; 1 *Joh.* 3. 14. *We know that we have paſſed from Death to Life, becauſe we love the brethren.* Nay, the Spirit of God putteth this as a Characteriſtical diſtinction between Saints and Sinners, in *ver.* 10. *In this the Children of God are manifeſt, and the Children of the Devil; Whoſoever*

doth not righteouſneſs, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. By Brethren we do not underſtand *Brethren by place*, thoſe who are of the ſame Countrey or Nation, ſuch are called Brethren, *Rom.* 9. 3. *Acts* 7. 23, 25. Nor do we underſtand *Brethren by race*, thoſe who are deſcended of the ſame Parents: ſuch are called Brethren *Jam.* 1. 2. But by Brethren we underſtand *Brethren by Grace*, and ſupernatural Regeneration, ſuch as are the Children of God; and theſe are the Brethren whom to love is a ſure Sign that we are the Children of God.

Phil. 1. 6.

Sol. To this I anſwer, that there is a love to the Children of God, which is a proof of our being the Children of God.

As for inſtance, when we love them as ſuch, for that very reaſon, as being the Saints of God, when we love them for the Image of God, which appeareth in them, becauſe of that Grace and Holineſs which ſhineth forth in their Converſations, this is truly commendable, to love the Godly for Godlineſs ſake, the Saints for Saint-ſhip ſake, this is a ſure Teſtimony of our Chriſtianity. The *love of grace* in another, is a good proof of *the life of grace* in our ſelves: There can be no better evidence of the Spirit of Chriſt in us, than to love the *Image of Chriſt* in others. For this is a certain truth, that a Sinner cannot love a Saint as ſuch; An *Iſraelite* is an abomination to an *Egyptian*.

Gen. 3. 15.

There is a contrariety and natural enmity between the two ſeeds; between the Children of the World, and thoſe whom the

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Father in his Eternal love hath choſen out of the World. Joh. 15. 19.

It is likeneſs which is the great ground of love; now there is the higheſt diſſimilitude and unlikeneſs between an unregenerate ſinner, and a Child of God, and therefore a Child of God cannot love a ſinner as a ſinner; *In whoſe eyes a vile perſon is contemned*, Pſal. 15. 4. He may love him as a Creature; He may love his Soul, or he may love him under ſome relation that he ſtands in to him. Thus God loves the damned Spirits, as they are his Creatures, but as fallen Angels he hateth them with an infinite hatred. So to love a ſinner *quatenus* a ſinner, this a Child of God cannot do, ſo neither can a ſinner love a Child of God as a Child of God. That he may love a Child of God, that I grant, but it is upon ſome other conſideration; He may love a perſon that is Holy, not the perſon for his holineſs, but for ſome other reſpect. As, *Simile ſimili gaudet.*

1. A man may love a Child of God for his loving, peaceable, courteous deportment to all with whom he converſeth. Religion beautifies the converſation of a man, and ſets him off to the eye of the World. The Grace of God is no friend to a moroſe, churliſh, unmannerly behaviour among men, it provokes an affable demeanour and ſweetneſs to all; and where this is found, it winneth reſpect and love from all.

2. A man may love a Saint for his outward greatneſs and ſplendor in the World; Men are very apt to honour worldly greatneſs, and therefore the *rich Saint* ſhall be loved and honoured, whilſt the *poor Saint* Jam. 2. 2, 3.

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is hated and despised. This is as if a man should value the goodness of his Sword by the Imbroidery of his Belt; or his Horse for the beauty of his Trappings, rather than for his strength and swiftness.

True love to the *Children of God*, reaches to all the Children of God, poor as well as rich, bound as well as free, ignoble as well as noble, for the Image of Christ is alike amiable and lovely in all.

3. A man may love a Child of God for his fidelity and usefulness in his place; Where Religion in the power of it taketh hold of a mans heart, it makes him true to all his betrustments, diligent in his business, faithful in all his Relations; and this obligeth Respect. A *carnal* Master may prize a *godly* Apprentice or Servant that makes Conscience of pleasing his Master, and is diligent in promoting his *interest*.

I might instance in many things of the like nature, as charity, beauty, wit, learning, parts, *&c.* which may procure love to the people of God from the men of the World. But this love is no proof of Charity: For,

First, It is but a *Natural* love arising from some carnal respect, or self ends; that love which is made by the Scripture an evidence
Col. 1. 8. of our Regeneration, *is a spiritual* love, the principal Loadstone and attractive whereof is Grace and Holiness; It is a love which
Mat. 10. 41. embraceth *a righteous man in the name of a righteous man.*

2. A carnal mans love to Saints, is a limited and bounded love; it is not univer-
Eth. 10. 3. sal, *to the seed*; Now as in sin, he that doth

doth not make Conſcience of every Sin, maketh Conſcience of no Sin as Sin; ſo he who doth not love all in whom the Image of *Chriſt* is found, loveth none for that of the Image of *Chriſt* which is found in them.

Now then, if the love we bear to the People of God may poſſibly ariſe from natural love only, or from ſome carnal reſpect; or if it be a limited Love, not extended to all the People of God, then it is poſſible that a man may love the People of God, and yet be no better than *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

18. *A man may obey the Commands of God, yea many of the Commands of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* *Balaam* ſeems very conſcientious of ſteering his courſe by the Compaſs of Gods Command: When *Balak* ſent to him to come and curſe the People of God, ſaith *Balaam, If Balak would give me his houſe full of Silver and Gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God*, Num. 22. 18. and ſo in the 38 *verſe*, ſaith he, *The word that God putteth in my Mouth, that ſhall I ſpeak:* The Young man went far in *Obedience*, Mar. 10. 20. *All theſe have I obſerved from my Youth up.* And yet he was but an Hypocrite, for he forſook Chriſt after all. Num. 23. 21, 20, 26.

But is it not ſaid, *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me ſhall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and manifeſt my ſelf unto him*, Joh. 14. 12. And doth not our Lord Chriſt tell us expreſly, *ye are my Friends if ye do what I command you*, Joh. 15. 14. And can a man be a Friend of Chriſt, Object.

Christ, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

I answer, that there is an obedience to the Commands of Christ, which is a sure proof of our Christianity and Friendship to Christ.

This Obedience hath a three-fold property.

It is { *Evangelical.* *Universal.* *Continual.*

First, It is *Evangelical* Obedience, and that both in matter and manner, ground and end.

In the *Matter of it*; and that is what God requires, *Joh.* 15. 14. *Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatever I command you.*

In the *Manner* of it; and that is according as God requires, *Joh.* 4. 24. *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth.*

In the *ground* of it, and that is a *pure Heart, a good Conscience, and Faith unfeigned,* 1 Tim. 1. 5.

In the *End* of it, and that is the honour and glory of God; *Whatever ye do, do all to the Glory of God,* 1 Cor. 10. 31.

Secondly, It is an universal Obedience, which extendeth it self to all the Commands of God alike; it respects the Duties of both Tables; Such was the Obedience of *Caleb, who followed the Lord fully*, and of *David*, who had *respect to all his Commands.*

Num. 14. 24. Psal. 119. 6.

Incipere multorum est, perseverare paucorum. Bern.

Thirdly, It is a *continual Obedience*, a putting the hand to Gods Plow without looking back; *I have inclined my heart to perform thy Statutes alway, even to the end,* Psal. 119. 112.

He

He that thus obeys the command of God, is a Chriſtian indeed, a friend of Chriſt indeed, but all obedience to the commands of God, is not this obedience. For,

1. There is a partial obedience, a piece-meal Religion, when a man obeys God in one command, and not in another: owns him in one duty, and not in another; When a man ſeems to make Conſcience of the duties of one Table, and not of the duties of another. This is the Religion of moſt.

Now this obedience is no obedience; for as he that doth not love God *above all*, doth not love God *at all*, ſo he that doth not obey *all* the commands *univerſally*, cannot be ſaid to obey any Command *truely*. It is ſaid of thoſe in *Samaria*, that they *feared the Lord, and ſerved their own gods after their own manner*, 2 Kings 17. 23. And yet in the very next verſe it is ſaid, *They feared not the Lord*; So that their fear of the Lord was no fear: In like manner that obedience to God is no Obedience, which is but a partial and piece-meal obedience.

2. A man may obey much; and yet be in his old nature, and if ſo, then all his obedience in that eſtate, is but *ſplendidum peccatum*, a painted ſin; *He that offereth an Oblation, is as if he offered Swines blood; and he that burneth Incenſe, as if he bleſſed an Idol*, Iſa. 66. 3. The nature muſt be renewed, before the command can be rightly obeyed, for *a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit*, Mat. 7. 18. Whatever a mans performances are, they cannot be called *obedience*, whilſt the heart remaineth unregenerate

nerate, becauſe the *Principle* is falſe and unſound; every duty done by a Believer, is accepted of God as a part of his obedience to the will of God, though it be done in much weakneſs; becauſe though the Believers *hand* is weak, yet his *heart is right*; The hypocrite may have the moſt *active hand*, but the Believer hath the moſt *faithful* and *ſincere heart*.

Eph. 6. 6. Rom. 6. 17.

3. A man may obey the *Law*, and yet have no Love to the *Law-giver:* A carnal heart may do the command of God, but he cannot love God, and therefore cannot do it aright, for love to God is the foundation and ſpring of all true obedience; Every Command of God is to be done in love: this is the *fulfilling of the Law*, Rom. 13. 10. The Apoſtle ſaith, *Though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned* (theſe ſeem to be acts of the higheſt obedience) *yet if I have not love, it profits me nothing*, 1 Cor. 13. 3.

4. I might add, that a man may be much in obedience from ſiniſter and baſe ſelfiſh ends, as the *Phariſees prayed much, gave much alms, faſted much*; but our Lord Chriſt tells us, that it was, *That they might be ſeen of men, and have glory of men*, Mat. 6. 2, 5, 16. Moſt of the Hypocrites Piety empties it ſelf into vain glory, and therefore he is but an *empty vine* in all he doth, becauſe *he bringeth forth fruit to himſelf*, Hoſ. 10. 1.

It is the end that juſtifies the action, indeed a good end cannot make a bad action good, but yet the want of a good end makes a good action bad.

Now

Now then, if a Man may obey the Commands of God partially, and by halves; if he may do it, and yet be in his natural state; if he may obey the Commands of God, and yet not love God; if the ends of his Obedience may be sinful and unwarrantable; then a man may be much in obeying the Commands of God, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

19. *A man may be sanctified, and yet be but almost a Christian.* Every kind of Sanctification doth not make a man a new Creature; for many are sanctified that are never renewed. You read in *Heb.* 10. 29. of them that count the *blood of the Covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing.*

Object. But doth not the Scripture tell us, *That both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them Brethren,* Heb. 2. 11. And can a man be one with Christ, and yet be but *almost a Christian?*

Sol. To this I answer; You must know there is a twofold work of Sanctification spoken of in Scripture.

The one common and ineffectual.

The other special and effectual.

That work of *Sanctification* which is true and effectual, is a working of the Spirit of God in the Soul, enabling it to the *mortifying* of all Sin, to the obeying of every Command, to walking with God in all well-pleasing. Rom. 8. 12. 1 Pet. 1. 2. Heb. 13.

Now whoever is thus sanctified, is one with him that sanctifieth. Christ will not be ashamed to call such Brethren, for they are *flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone.* Eph. 5. 30.

But

But then there is a more common work of Sanctification, which is ineffectual as to the two great works of dying to Sin, and
Rom. 6. 11. living to God. This kind of Sanctification may help to restrain Sin, but not to mortifie Sin; it may lop off the Boughs, but it layeth not the Axe to the Root of the
Mat. 12. 44. Tree; it sweeps and garnishes the *Room* with common Virtues, but doth not adorn it with saving Graces; so that a man is but *almost a Christian*, notwithstanding this Sanctification.

Or thus, there is an { *Inward* and *Outward* } Sanctification.

Inward Sanctification is that which deals with the Soul and its Faculties, Understanding, Conscience, Will, Memory and Affections. *Outward Sanctification* is that which deals with the Life and Conversation; both these must concur to make a man a Christian indeed; therefore the Apostle puts them together in his prayer for the *Thessalonians*, 1 Thes. 5. 23. *The God of Peace sanctifie you wholly, and I pray God your whole Spirit, and Soul, and Body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* A man is then sanctified wholly, when he is sanctified both inwardly and outwardly, both in heart and affections, and in Life and Conversation. Outward Sanctification is not enough without inward, nor inward without outward; we must have both *clean hands, and a pure heart*, Psalm 4. 4. The Heart must be pure, that we may not incur blame from within; and the hands must be clean, that we may not incur

Non magna munera, sed immunis manus, mensque sincera Deo placet.

incur shame from without; we must have hearts *sprinkled from an evil Conscience, and bodies washed with pure Water. We must cleanse our selves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*, 2 Corinthians 7. 1. Inward purity is the most excellent, but without the outward it is not sufficient; The true Christian is made up of both. Heb. 10. 22.

Now many have clean hands, but unclean hearts; they *wash the outside of the Cup and Platter, when all is filthy within*; Now the former without the latter profiteth a man no more than it profited *Pilate*, who condemned Christ, to wash his hands in the presence of the People; *Manus abluit & cor polluit*, he washed his hands of the blood of Christ, and yet had a hand in the death of Christ. The *Egyptian* Temples were beautiful on the out-side, but within you should find nothing but some Serpent or Crocodile. *He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly*, Rom. 2. 28. *Judas* was a *Saint* without, but a *Sinner* within; openly a *Disciple*, but secretly a *Devil*. Joh. 6. 70.

Some pretend to inward sanctity without outward; this is the pretence of the open sinner: Though I sometimes drop an idle foolish word, saith he, or though I sometimes swear an Oath, yet I think no hurt, I thank God, my heart is as good as the best; such are like the Sinner *Moses* mentions, that *blessed himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst*, Deut. 19. 20.

Some pretend outward sanctity, without inward; such are like the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*,

Mat. 23. 28. *Pharisees*, who *outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within are full of hypocrisie and Iniquity*; fair Professors, but foul sinners.

Inward Sanctity without *outward*, is *impossible*, for it will reform the life; *outward sanctity* without *inward* is *unprofitable*, for it will not reform the heart; a man is not a true Christian without both; the body doth not make a man without the soul, nor the soul without the body; both are essential to the being of a man; So the sanctification of both, are essential to the being of the *new man*. True sanctification begins at the heart, but works out into the Life and Conversation; And if so, then a man may attain to an outward sanctification, and yet for want of the inward, be no better than *almost a Christian*.

20. And so I shall end this long pursuit of the almost Christian in his progress Heaven-ward, with this one general conclusion.

A man may do all (as to external duties and worship) that a true Christian can, and when he hath done all, be but almost a Christian.

You must know, all the commands of God have an *intra* and an *extra*; there is (as I may say,) the Body and the Soul of the command.

And accordingly there is an *internal* and an *external* worship of God.

Now the *internal* acts of worshipping of God, are to love God, to fear God, to delight in God, to trust in God, *&c.*

The *external* acts of worshipping God, are by praying, teaching, hearing, *&c.*

Now there is a vast difference between these internal and external acts of Worship, (and

(and indeed ſuch a difference there is) that they diſtinguiſh the *altogether* from the *almoſt* Chriſtian; the ſincere Believer from the unſound Profeſſor; and indeed in this very thing, the main difference between them doth lye.

1. *Internal* acts of worſhip are good, *propter fieri*; The goodneſs doth adhere intrinſecally to the thing done; a man cannot love God, nor fear God, but it will be imputed to him for a gracious act, and a great part of his holineſs.

But now *external* acts of Worſhip, are not denominated good, ſo much from the matter done, *propter fieri*, as from the manner of doing them; a man cannot ſin in loving and delighting in God, but he may ſin in praying and hearing, *&c.* for want of a due manner.

2. *Internal* acts of worſhip put a goodneſs into *external*, it is our faith, our love, our fear of God, that makes our duties good.

3. They better the heart, and greaten the degrees of a mans holineſs; External duties do not always do this; a man may pray, and yet his heart never the holier; he may hear the word, and yet his heart never the ſofter, but now the more a man fears God, the wiſer he is, *Prov.* 1. 7. The more a man loves God, the holier he is: Love is the perfection of holineſs, we ſhall never be perfect in holineſs, 'till we come to be perfect in love.

4. There is ſuch an excellency in this *Internal* Worſhip, that he who mixes it with his *external* duties, is a true Chriſtian when he doth leaſt: But without this mixture, he

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is but *almost a Christian* that doth most.

Internal Acts of Worship, joyned with outward, sanctifie them, and make them accepted of God, though few; *External* acts of worship, without inward, make them abhorred of God, though they be *never so many.*

So that though the almost Christian may do all those duties in Hypocrisie, which a true Christian doth in sincerity: Nay, though in doing external duties, he may out-do the true Christian, (as the Comet makes a greater blaze than the true Star: If *Elijah* fast and mourn, *Baal*'s Priests will cut their Flesh) yet he cannot do those *internal* duties that the meanest true Christian can.

The almost Christian can pray, but he cannot love God; he can teach or hear, *&c.* but he cannot take delight in God.

Job. 27. 10. This is *Christianorum propria virtus.*

Mark *Job*'s query concerning the Hypocrite: *Will he delight himself in the Almighty?*

He will *Pray* to the *Almighty*, but *will he delight himself in the Almighty?* will he take pleasure in God?

Hæc propria est delectationis materia, si cum habeas quæ desideraveris perfruaris: Pined. in loc.

Ah no! he will not, he cannot.

Delight in God, ariseth from a suitableness between the faculty and the object; now none more unsuitable than God and a carnal heart.

Delight arises from the having what we desire, and from enjoying what we have: How then can he delight in God, that neither enjoyeth, nor hath, nor truly desireth God?

Delight in God is one of the highest exercises

cises of Grace; and therefore how can he delight in God, that hath no Grace?

Why then should any Saint of God be discouraged, when he hears how far the *almost Christian* may go in the way to Heaven, whenas he that is the weakest true Believer, that hath the least true Grace, goes farther than he, for he believes in, and loves God.

Should the *Almost Christian* do less (as to matter of external Duties) yet if he had but the least true Faith, the least sincerity of Love to Christ, he would surely be saved; and should the true Christian do ten times more Duties than he doth, yet, had he not Faith in Christ, and love to Christ, he would surely be rejected.

Oh therefore let not any weak Believer be discouraged, though Hypocrites may out-do them, and go beyond them in duty; for all their duties are done in Hypocrisie; but your Faith and Love to God in Duties, is a proof of your Sincerity.

1. I do not speak this to discourage any Soul in the doing of Duties, or to beat down outward *Performances*, but to rectifie the Soul in the *doing of them.*

As the Apostle saith, *Covet earnestly the best gifts; but yet I shew you a more excellent way*; So I say, covet the best Gifts, covet much to be in Duties, much in Prayer, much in hearing, &c. *But yet I shew you a more excellent way*, and that is, the way of Faith and Love; pray much, but then believe much too Hear much, read much, but then love God much too. Delight in the Word and Ordinances of God much, but then delight in 1 Cor. 12.32.

in the God of Ordinances more.

And when you are moſt in duties, as to your uſe of them; Oh then be ſure to be above duties as to your reſting and dependance upon them. Would you be Chriſtians indeed, altogether Chriſtians? O then, be much in the uſe and exerciſe of Ordinances, but be much more in faith and dependance upon Chriſt and his Righteouſneſs; when your Obedience is moſt *to the command*, then let your Faith be moſt upon the *Promiſe*.

The Profeſſor reſts in his Duties, and ſo is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*; but you muſt be ſure to reſt upon the Lord Chriſt; this is the way to be *altogether Chriſtians*; for, *if ye believe, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and Heirs according to the Promiſe*.

And thus I have anſwered the firſt Query; to wit, How far a man may go in the way to Heaven, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*.

1. He may have much Knowledge.
2. He may have great Gifts.
3. He may have a high Profeſſion.
4. He may do much againſt Sin.
5. He may deſire Grace.
6. He may tremble at the Word.
7. He may delight in the Word.
8. He may be a Member of the Church of Chriſt.
9. He may have great hopes of Heaven.
10. He may be under great and viſible changes.
11. He may be very zealous in the matters of Religion.
12. He may be much in Prayer.
13. He may ſuffer for Chriſt.

14. He

14. He may be called of God.

15. He may in some sense have the Spirit of God.

16. He may have some kind of Faith.

17. He may love the People of God.

18. He may go far in obeying the Commands of God.

19. He may be in some sense sanctified.

20. He may do all (as to external duties) that a true Christian can, and yet be no better than *almost a Christian.*

The second Question.

Why, or whence is it, that many men go so far, as that they come to be almost Christians?

First, *It may be to answer the call of Conscience*; though few men have Grace, yet all men have Conscience.

Now do but observe, and you shall see how far Conscience may go in this work.

1. *Conscience owns a God, and that this God must be worshipped and served by the Creature.* Atheists in practice we have many, such as the Apostle speaks of, *Tit.* 1. 16. *They profess they know God, but in works they deny him.*

But Atheists in Judgment none can be; *Tully*, a Heathen, could say, *Nulla gens tam barbara*, &c.

Now there being such a light in Conscience as to discover that there is a God, and that he must be worshipped by the help of farther light, the light of the Word; a man may be enabled to do much in the wayes of God, and yet his Heart without a dram of Grace.

2. Know this, that *natural Conscience is capable of great improvements from the means of grace*; sitting under the Ordinances, may exceed-

dingly heighten the endowments of Conscience, though they do not sanctifie Conscience, it may be much regulated, though it be not all renewed; it may be *enlightned, convinced*, and yet never *savingly converted* and *changed*.

Ye read in *Heb.* 6. 4. of some that were *once enlightned, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost*. What work shall we call this? It could not be a saving work, a true change and Conversion of state; for notwithstanding this enlightning and tasting, and partaking, yet they are here said to *fall away*, vers. 6.

Had it been a true work of Grace, they could never have fallen away from that; a Deut. 33. 27. Believer may fall, but he cannot fall away; Luk. 22. 32. he may fall foully, but he can never fall finally, for *underneath are the everlasting Arms*; his Faith is established in the strength of the Prayer of Christ, that our Faith fail not; nay, he tells us expressly, that it is eternal life which he gives, from which we shall *never perish*, John 10. 28.

This work then here spoken of, cannot be any saving work, because it is not an abiding work; for they that are under it, are said to fall away from it; but though it be not a saving work, yet it is a supernatural work; it is an improvement made by the word upon the Consciences of men through the power of the Spirit; and therefore they are said to *taste the good word of God*, and to be made *Partakers of the Holy Ghost*; they have not the

Spirit

Spirit abiding in them savingly, but striving with them, and working upon them convincingly, to the awakening, and setting conscience on work. And Conscience thus stirred, may carry a man very far in Religion, and in the duties of the Gospel, and yet be but a natural conscience.

A common work of the Spirit, may stead a man very much in the duties of Religion, though it must be a special work of the Spirit that steads a man to salvation; a man may have the assisting presence of the Spirit, enabling him to preach and pray, and yet he may perish for want of the renewing presence of the Spirit enabling him to believe: *Judas* had the former, and yet perished for want of the latter; he had the Spirit assisting him to cast out Devils, but yet he had not the Spirit renewing him, for he was cast out himself. Thus a man may have an improved conscience, and yet be a stranger to a renewed conscience; and conscience thus improved, may put a man very much upon duty.

I pray God none of us mistake a *conscience* thus improved by the *word*, for a *conscience* renewed by the Spirit. the mistake is very easie, especially when a life of duties is the fruit of it.

3. *The conscience of a natural man is subject to grief and trouble*; though a natural *conscience* is not *sanctified* with grace, yet it is often troubled at sin; trouble of conscience is not incident to *Believers* only, but sometimes to *Unbelievers* also. A *Believers* conscience is sometimes troubled when his sin is truly pardoned; and a natural mans conscience is trou-

bled for sin, though it is never freed from sin. God sometimes sets the Word home upon the sinners Conscience, and applies the terrours of the Law to it, and this fills the soul with fear and horrour of Death and Hell; now in this case the soul usually betakes it self to a life of duties; meerly to fence trouble out of conscience.

2 Sam. 14. 30, 31. When *Absalom* sets fire on *Joab*s Cornfields, then he runs to him, though he refused before; so when God lets a spark of Hell, (as it were) fall upon the sinners *conscience*, in applying the terrors of the Word; this drives the sinner to a life of duties, which he never minded before. The ground of many a mans engaging in Religion, is the trouble of his conscience; and the end of his continuing in Religion, is the quieting of conscience; if Conscience would never check him, God should never hear from him.

Natural Conscience hath a voice, and speaks aloud many times in the sinners ears, and telleth him, this ought not to be done, God must not be forgotten, the *Commands of God* ought not to be slighted; living in sin will be the ruine of the soul; and hence it is that a natural man runs to duties, and takes up a lifeless and graceless profession, that he may thereby silence Conscience. As a man sick in his stomach, whatever sweet morsel he hath eaten, he brings up all; and although it was sweet in the eating, yet it is bitter in the rising:

So it fareth with the sinner, when he is Sermon-sick, or Conscience-sick; though his sin was *sweet* in the practice, yet the thought of it riseth bitter upon the conscience, and

then

then his profession of Religion is the Pill he rolleth about in his mouth, to take away the bitterness of sins taste.

4. *Natural Conscience enlightned by the Word, may discover to a man much of the misery of a natural state*; though not effectually to bring him out of it, yet so as to make him restless and weary in it; it may shew a sinner his nakedness, and hereupon the soul runneth to a life of *duties*, thinking hereby to stead the misery of his case, and to make a covering for his nakedness. It is said, *Gen.* 3. 7. That when *Adam* and *Eve saw they were naked, they sowed fig-leaves together, and made themselves a covering.* So when once the sinner seeth his nakedness and vileness, by reason of sin, whereas he should run to Christ, and close with him, and beg his righteousness for a covering, *that the shame of his nakedness doth not appear*, Rev. 3. 18. He rather runneth to a life of duties and performances, and thus maketh himself a covering with the *fig-leaves* of *a profession* without *Christ* truely embraced, and Conscience at all renewed. Natural man would fain be his own Saviour, and supposeth a change of state to be a thing within his own power, and that the true work of grace, lieth in leaving off the practice of sin, and taking up a life of duties, and therefore upon this principle doth many a graceless professor out-strip a sound Believer; for he resteth in his own performances, and hopeth these will commend him to God.

If a natural Conscience may go thus far, then what difference is there betwee this natural Conscience in Hypocrites and Sinners, and a renewed Quest.

Conscience in believers? Or how may I know whether the working of my Conscience be the working of nature only, or else of grace wrought in it?

Sol. I grant, that it is difficult to distinguish between the one and the other; and the difficulty hath a two-fold rise.

1. It ariseth from that Hypocrisie that is in the best Saints, the weakest believer is no *Hypocrite*, but yet there is some *hypocrisie* in the strongest Believer; where there is *most grace*, there is *some sin*; and where there is *most sincerity*, yet there is *some hypocrisie*.

Pigmalion made an Image so *lively*, that he deceived himself, and taking the Picture for a person, fell in love with the Picture.

Now it is very incident to a tender Conscience to misgive and mistrust its state upon the sight of any sin; when he sees hypocrisie break out in any duty or performance, then he complains, *Surely my aims are not sincere, my Conscience is not renewed; it is but natural Conscience enlightned, not by Grace purged and changed.*

2. It ariseth from that resemblance there is between *grace* and *hypocrisie*, for *hypocrisie* is a resemblance of grace without substance, the likeness of *grace* without the life of grace. There is no grace, but an hypocrite may have somewhat like it; and there is no duty done by a Christian, but an hypocrite may outstrip him in it. Now when one that hath not true grace shall go farther than one that hath, this may well make the Believer question whether his grace be true or not; or whether the workings of his Conscience be not the workings of nature only, rather than of grace wrought in it.

But to answer the Question; You may make a judgment of this in these seven particulars.

1. *If*

1. *If a natural mans Conscience pitcheth him upon Duty, he doth usually bound himself in the work of God*: His duties are limited, his obedience is a limited obedience; he doth one duty, and neglecteth another; he picketh and chuseth among the Commands of *God*, obeyeth one, and slighteth another. Thus much is enough, what need any more? if I do thus and thus, I shall go to Heaven at last.

But now where Conscience is renewed by Grace, there it is otherwise; though there may be many weaknesses which accompany its duties, yet that Soul never bounds it self in working after *God*; it never loves *God* so much, but still it would love him more, nor seeks him so much, but still it would seek him more; nor doth it serve God so well at any time, but still it makes Conscience of serving him better. *A renewed Conscience is a spring of universal Obedience,* Psal. 119. 128. for it seeth an infinite excellency, and goodness, and holiness in God, and therefore would fain have its service rise up toward some proportionableness to the Object; a God of infinite excellency and goodness should have infinite love, saith Conscience; a holy God should have service from a holy Heart, saith Conscience. Psal. 119. 20.

Now then, if I set bounds to my love to God, or to my service to God; if I limit my self in my obedience to the holy God; love one Command, and slight another; obey in one point, and yet lie cross in another; then is all I do but the working of a natural Conscience. But on the other hand, if I love the Lord with my whole Heart, and whole

soul, and serve him with all my might and strength: *If I esteem all Gods precepts concerning all things, to be right, and have respect to all thy commands*, then is my love and service from a renewed conscience.

Mat. 22. 37. Mark 12. 33.

2. *If a natural mans conscience check or accuse for sin, then he seeketh to stop the mouth of it, but not to satisfie it*; most of the natural mans duties are to still and stifle conscience.

But now the Believer chuseth rather to let conscience cry, than to stop the mouth of it until he can do it upon good terms, until he can fetch in satisfaction to it, from the blood of Jesus Christ, by fresh acts of faith apprehended and applied.

The natural man seeketh to still the noise of conscience, rather than to remove the guilt, the Believer seeketh the removal of guilt by the application of *Christs blood*, and then conscience is quiet of it self. As a foolish man having a mote fall'n into his eye, and making it water, he wipeth away the water, and labours to keep it dry, but never searcheth his eye to get out the Mote; but a wise man mindeth not so much the wiping as the searching his eye; somewhat is got in, and that causeth the watering, and therefore the cause must be removed.

Now then, if when conscience accuseth for sin, I take up a life of duties, a form of godliness, to stop the mouth of conscience, and if hereupon conscience be still and quiet, then is this but a natural conscience; but if when conscience checks, it will not be satisfied with any thing but the *blood of Christ*, and therefore I use duties to bring me to

Christ,

Christ, and if I beg the *sprinkling* of his *blood* upon Conscience, and labour not so much to stop the mouth of it, as to remove guilt from it, then is this a renewed Conscience.

3. *There is no natural man, let him go never so far, let him do never so much in matters of Religion, but still he hath his* Dalilah, *his bosom lust.* *Judas* went far, but he carried his covetousness along with him; *Herod* went far, *he did many things* under the force of *John*'s Ministery, but yet there was one thing he did not; he did not put away his Brothers Wife; his *Herodias* lay in his bosom still. Nay, commonly, all the natural mans duties are to hide some sin, his profession is only made use of for a *cover-shame.* Joh. 12. 6. Mark 6. 20. ver. 17, 18.

But now the renewed Conscience hateth all sin, as *David* did, *I hate every false way*; he *regardeth no iniquity in his heart*; he useth duties, not to cover sin, but to help work down, and work out sin. Psal. 119. 128. Psal. 66. 18.

Now then, if I profess Religion, if I make mention of the name of the Lord, *and make my boast of the Law, and yet through breaking the Law dishonour God*; If I live in the love of any sin, and make use of my profession to cover it, then am I an *hypocrite*, and my duties flow but from a natural Conscience; but on the other hand, *If I name the name of the Lord Jesus*, and withal *depart from iniquity*; if I use duties not to cover, but to discover and mortifie sin, then am I upright before God, and my duties flow from a renewed Conscience. Rom. 2. 2. 2 Tim. 2. 19.

4. *A natural man prides himself in his duties*; if he be much in duty, then he is much lifted up under duty; so did the *Pharisees*,

Luk. 18. 11, 12. Luk. 18. *God I thank thee that I am not as other men are*; and why? where lay the difference; why, *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all*, &c.

But now take a gracious heart, a renewed Conscience, and when his duties are at highest, then is his heart at lowest. Thus it was with the Apostle *Paul*, he was much in service, *in season, and out of season*, preaching up the Lord Jesus with all boldness and earnestness, and yet very humble in a sense of his own unworthiness under all: *I am not worthy to be called an Apostle*, 1 Cor. 15. 9. *I am me who am less than the least of all Saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*, Eph. 3. And again, 1 *Tim.* 1. 15. *Of sinners I am chief.* Thus a believer when he is highest in duties, then is he lowest in humility; duty puffeth up the hypocrite, but a Believer comes away humbled, and why? because the hypocrite hath had no visions of God; he hath seen only his own gifts and parts, and this exalteth him; but the Believer hath seen God, and enjoyed Communion with God, and this humbleth him: Communion with God, though it be very refreshing, yet it is also very abasing and humbling to the Creature. *Hierom* observeth on *Zeph.* 1. 1. where it is said, that *Cushi* was the *Son of* Gedaliah, *the Son of* Amariah; That *Amariah* signifieth *the word of the Lord, Gedaliah* signifieth *the greatness of the Lord*, and *Cushi* is interpreted *humility*, or my *Æthiopian*. So that saith he, *from the Word of the Lord* cometh a sight of the *greatness of the Lord*, and from a sight of the *greatness of the Lord* cometh *humility*.

No

Now then, if I pride my self in any duty, and am puffed up under my performances, then have I not seen nor met with *God* in any duty. But on the other hand, if when my gifts are at highest, my heart is at lowest; if when my Spirit is most raised, my heart is then most humbled; if in the midst of all my services I can maintain a sense of my own unworthiness; if *Cushi* be the Son of *Gedaliah*, then have I seen and had Communion with God in duty, and my performances are from a renewed Conscience.

5. *Look what that is to which the heart doth secretly render the glory of a duty, and that is the principle of the duty:* in *Hab.* 1. 16. ye read of them that *Sacrifice to their Net, and burn incense to their drag*; where the glory of an *action* is rendred to a mans self, the principle of that action is self: all *Rivers* run into the *Sea*, that is an *argument* they came from the *Sea*; so when all a mans duties *terminate* in self, then is self the principle of all. Eccl. 1. 7.

Now all the natural mans duties run into himself; he was never by a through work of grace truly cast out of himself and brought to deny himself, and therefore he can rise no higher than himself in all he doth; he was never brought to be *poor in Spirit*, and so to live upon another; to be carried out of all duties to Jesus Christ.

But the Believer giveth the glory of all his services to God; whatever strength or life there is in duty. God hath all the glory; for he is by grace outed of himself, and therefore seeth no excellency or worthiness in self. Psal. 115. 1.

I laboured more abundantly than they all, saith the Apostle; but to whom doth he ascribe the glory of this? to self? No, *yet not I*, saith he, *but the grace of God which was with me*, 1 Cor. 15. 10. Whenever the grace of Christ is wrought in the heart as a principle of duty, you shall find the Soul when it is most carried out with a *yet not I*, in the mouth of it, *I live, yet not I*; *I laboured more abundantly than all*; *yet not I*; self is disclaimed, and Christ most advanced, when it is from grace that the heart is quickned; the *twenty four Elders cast their Crowns at Christs feet*, Rev. 4. 10.

Gal. 2. 20.

There are two things very hard; one is to take the shame of our sins to our selves; the other is to give the glory of our services to Christ.

Now then. *If I sacrifice to my own Net*, if I aim at my own credit or profit, and give the glory of all I do to self, then do I sow to the flesh, and was never yet cast out of self, but act only from a natural Conscience; but if I give the glory of all my strength and life in duty only to God, if I magnifie grace in all, and can truly say in all I do, *yet not I*, then am I truly cast out of self, and do what I do with a renewed Conscience.

Gal. 6. 8.

6. *Though a natural Conscience may put a man much upon service, yet it never presseth to the attainment of holiness*; so that he carrieth an unsanctified heart under all; how long was *Judas* a professor, and not one dram of grace that he had got? *The foolish Virgins* (you know) *took their lamps, but took no Oyl in their Vessels*; that is, they looked more after a profession, than after sanctification.

Mat. 25. 3.

But

But now when a renewed conſcience putteth a man upon duty, it is ſucceeded with the growth of holineſs; as grace helpeth to the doing of duty, ſo duty helpeth to the growing of grace; a believer is the more holy, and the more heavenly, by his being much in duties.

Now then, if I am much in a life of duties, and yet a ſtranger to a life of holineſs; if I maintain a high profeſſion, and yet have not a true work of ſanctification; if (like children in the Rickets) I grow big in the head, but weak in the feet, then have I gifts and parts, but no grace; and though I am much in ſervice, yet have I but a natural conſcience; but on the other hand, if the holineſs of my converſation carryeth a proportion to my profeſſion; if I am not a *hearer of the word only*, but a *doer of it*; if grace groweth in ſeaſons of duty, then I do act in the things of God from a renewed conſcience.

7. And laſtly, *If a natural conſcience be the ſpring of duty, why then this ſpring runs faſteſt at firſt, and ſo abateth, and at laſt drieth up:* but if a renewed conſcience, a ſanctified heart be the ſpring of duty, then this ſpring will never dry up, it will run alwaies, from firſt to laſt, and run quicker at laſt than firſt. *I know thy works, and the laſt to be more than the firſt*, Rev. 2. 19. *The righteous ſhall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands ſhall be ſtronger and ſtronger*, Job. 17. 9.

But you will ſay, Why doth that man abate and languiſh in his duties, that doth them from a natural Conſcience, more than he Queſt.

he that doth them from a renewed Conscience?

Answ. The reason is, because they grow upon a failable root, a decaying root, and that is nature; nature is a fading root, and so are all its fruits fading; but the Duties done by a renewed Conscience, are fruits that grow upon a lasting root, and that is *Christ*, *Gifts have their root in Nature, but Grace hath its root in Christ*, and therefore the weakest Grace shall out-live the greatest Gifts and Parts, because there is life in the root of one, and not in the root of another, Gifts and Grace differ like the leather of your shoe, and the skin of your foot: Take a pair of shoes, that have the thickest soles, and if you go much in them, the leather weareth out, and in a little time a mans foot cometh to the ground; but now a man that goeth barefoot all his days, the skin of his feet doth not wear out; why should not the sole of his foot sooner wear out than the Sole of his shoe, for the leather is much thicker than the skin? the reason is, because there is life in the one, and not in the other; there is life in the skin of the foot, and therefore that holdeth out, and groweth thicker and thicker, harder and harder; but there is no life in the sole of his shoe, and therefore that weareth out, and waxeth thinner and thinner; so it is with Gifts and Grace.

Now then, if I decay and abate, and grow weary of a Profession, and fall away at last; if I begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh, then was all I did from a *natural Conscience*, but if I grow and hold out, if I *persevere*

to

the end, and my last works be more than my first, then I act from a *renewed Conscience*.

And thus I have in seven things answered the question, *viz.* if Conscience may go thus far in putting a man upon duties, then what difference is there between this natural Conscience in Hypocrites and Sinners, and renewed Conscience in Believers?

And that is the first answer to the main query. *viz. Whence is it that many men go so far, as that they come to be almost Christians?*

It is to answer the *call of Conscience*.

Secondly, *It is from the power of the Word under which they live*; though the Word doth not work effectually upon all, yet it hath a great power upon the hearts of sinners to reform them, though not to renew them.

1. It hath *vim discriminativam*, a discerning, discovering power, *Heb.* 4. 12. *The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the joynts and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* This is the glass where every man may see what manner of man he is; as the light of the Sun discovers the little Motes; so the light of the World shining into Conscience, discovers little sins. Jam. 1. 23.

2. The word hath *vim legislativam*, the power of a Law; it gives law to the whole Soul, binds Conscience; it is therefore frequently called the Law in Scripture; *unless thy Law had been my delight, &c. To the Law, and to the Testimony*; this is spoken of the whole Word of God, which is therefore Psal. 119. 29. Isa. 8. 20.

call

called a Law, because of its binding power upon the Conscience.

3. It hath *vim judicatoum*, a judging power: *Joh.* 12. 48. *The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day*; the sentence that God will pass upon Sinners hereafter, is no other than what the word passeth upon them here: the judgment of God, is not a day wherein God will pass any new sentence, but it is such a day wherein God will make a solemn publick ratification of the judgment passed by the Ministery of the word upon Souls here; this I gather clearly from *Mat.* 18. 18. *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in Heaven*; so that by bringing a mans heart to the word, and trying it by that, he may quickly know what that sentence is that God will pass upon his Soul in the last day; for as the judgment of the word is now, such will the judgment of God be concerning him in the last day.

Indeed there is a twofold power further than this, in the word.

It hath { *Vim Plasticam*, & *Vim Salvificam*.

A begetting and saving power; but this is put forth only upon some.

But the other is more extensive, and hath a great causality upon a profession of goodness, even among them that have no grace.

A man that is under this threefold power of discerning Law and Judgment, that hath his heart *ransacked* and discovered, his Conscience

science *bound* and *awed*, his state and sinful condition *judged* and *condemned*, may take up a resolution of a new life, and convert himself to a great profession of Religion.

Thirdly, *A man may go far in this course of profession from affectation of applause and credit, and to get a name in the World*, as it is said of the *Pharisees, They love to pray in the Market-places, and in the corners of the streets, to be seen of men.* Mat. 6. 6.

Many are of *Machiavels* principle, that the appearance of virtue is to be sought; because though the use of it is a trouble, yet the credit of it is a help.

Jerome in his Epistle to *Julian*, calls such *popularis aurae vilia mancipia*, the base *bondslaves* of common Fame. Many a man doth that for credit, that he will not do for conscience; and owns *Religion* more for the sake of *lust*, than for the sake of Christ; thus making *Gods* stream to turn the *Devils Mill*.

Fourthly, *It is from a desire of Salvation*: there is in all men a desire of Salvation; it is natural to every being, to love and seek its own preservation; *who will shew us any good? Psal.* 4. 6. This is the Language of Nature, seeking happiness to its self.

Many a man may be carried so far out in the desires of salvation, as to do many things to obtain it.

So did the *young man*, *Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* he went far, and did much, obeying many commands, and all out of a desire of salvation: So then, put these together, and there is an answer to that question.

The

The call of Conscience,
The power of the Word,
The affectation of Credit: And
The desire of Salvation.

These may carry a man so far as to be almost a Christian.

Quest. The third Question propounded, is this:

Thirdly, *Whence is it that many are but almost Christians, when they have gone thus far? what is the cause of this?*

Answ. I might multiply answers to this Question; but I shall instance in two only, which I judge the most material.

First, *It is for want of right and sound Conviction*; if a man be not throughly convinced of sin, and his heart truly broken, whatever his profession of godliness may be, yet he will be sure to miscarry; every work of conviction is not a through work; there are convictions that are only natural and rational, but not from the powerful work of the Spirit of God.

Rational Conviction what? Rational Conviction, *is that which proceeds from the working of a natural conscience, charging guilt from the light of nature, by the help of those natural truths, those common principles of reason that are in all men:* This is the conviction you read of *Rom.* 2. 14, 15. It is said, that the *Gentiles* who had not the Law, yet had their *consciences bearing witness, and accusing, or excusing one another*; though they had not the *light of Scripture*, yet they had convictions from the *light of nature*; now by the help of the Gospel-light, these convictions may be much improved, and yet the heart not renewed.

Spiritual Conviction what? But then there is a spiritual conviction, and

and this is that work of the Spirit of God upon the Sinners heart by the Word, whereby the guilt and filth of Sin is fully discovered, and the woe and misery of a natural state distinctly set home upon the Conscience, to the dread and terror of the Sinner, whilest he abides in that state and condition.

And this is the Conviction that is a sound and through work: Many have their Convictions, but not this *spiritual Conviction*.

Now you'l say, *Suppose I am at any time under Conviction, how shall I know whether my Convictions be only from a natural Conscience, or whether they be from the Spirit of God.* Query.

I should digress too much to draw out the Solution of this Question to its just length; I shall therefore in five things only lay down the most considerable difference between the one and the other. Answ.

1. *Natural Convictions reach chiefly to open and scandalous Sins*, sins against the light of Nature; *for natural Conviction can reach no farther than natural light.*

But *spiritual Conviction* reaches to *secret, inward and undiscerned* sins, such as *Hypocrisie, Formality, Lukewarmness, Deadness, and hardness of Heart*, &c.

Observe then, whether your Trouble for sin looks *inward* as well as *outward*; and reaches not only to open sins, but to secret lusts, to inward and spiritual sins; and if so, this is a sure sign of the work of the *Spirit*, because the trouble occasioned by these sins bears a more immediate relation to the Holiness of God, who only is offended by them, they being such as none else can see or know.

2. *Natural Convictions deal only with a mans*

Con-

Conversation, not with his state and condition, with sins actual, not original; but *spiritual Convictions* reach to all sins, to sins of Heart, as well as sins of Life; to the sin of our nature, as well as the sins of practice; to the sin that is born in us, as well as the sin that is done by us.

Where the Spirit of the Lord cometh to work effectually in any soul, he holdeth the glass of the Law before the sinners eyes, and openeth his eyes to look into the Glass, and so see all that deformity and filthiness that is in his Heart and nature.

The Apostle *Paul* said, *I had not known sin, but by the Law*, Rom. 7. 7. How can this be true, that he had not known sin, but by the Law, when as the Light of Nature discovers sin? It is said of the *Gentiles*, *that having not the Law, they are a Law unto themselves.*

Rom. 2. 14.

This sin therefore that the Apostle speaks of, is not to be understood of sin actual, but of sin original; I had not known the pollution of Nature, that fountain of sin that is within, this I had not known but by the Law; and indeed this is a discovery that natural light cannot make: It is true, the Philosopher could say, πάντων μὲν πρώτιστα κακῶν ἐπιθυμία ἐστίν, that lust is the first and chief of all sins, but I cannot think he meant it of original sin, but of the *inordinacy of appetite, and desire at most*; for I find that the wisest of the Philosophers understood nothing of Original sin; hear *Seneca*, *Erras si tecum vitia nasci putas, supervenerunt, ingesta sunt*; sin is not born with thee, but brought in since. *Tam sine vitio, quam sine virtute nascimur.*

Timon apud Laertium.

Quintilian

Quintilian saith, It is more marvel that any one man sins, than that all men should live honestly, sin is so against the nature of men; how blind were they in this point! and so was *Paul*, till the Spirit of the Lord discovered it to him by the Word. And indeed this is a discovery proper to the Spirit. It is he that makes the sinner see all the deformity and filthiness that is within; it is he that pulleth off all the Sinners raggs, and makes him see his naked and wretched condition; it is he that shews us the *blindness* of the Mind, the stubbornness of the Will, the disorderedness of the Affections, the searedness of the Conscience, the plague of our Hearts, and the sin of our natures, and therein the desperateness of our state.

3. *Natural Convictions carry the soul out to look more on the evil that comes by sin, than on the evil that is in sin*, so that the Soul under this Conviction is more troubled at the dread of Hell, and Wrath, and Damnation, than at the vileness and hainous nature of sin.

But now *spiritual Convictions* work the Soul into a greater sensibleness of the evil that is in sin, than of the evil that comes by sin; the dishonour done to God by walking contrary to his will, the wounds that are made in the Heart of Christ, the grief that the holy Spirit of God is put to, this wounds the soul more than a thousand Hells.

4. *Natural Convictions are not durable, they are quickly worn out*; they are like a slight cut in the skin, that bleeds a little, and is sore for the present, but is healed again, and in a few dayes not so much as a scar to be seen.

But

But *spiritual Convictions* are durable, they cannot be worn out, they abide in the Soul till they have reached their end, (which is the *change* of the *sinner*.)

The *Convictions of the Spirit* are like a deep wound in the flesh, that goes to the bone, and seems to endanger the life of the Patient, and is not healed but with great skill; and when it is healed leaves a scar behind it, that when the Patient is well, yet he can say, *Here is the mark of my wound, which will never wear out.*

Una eademque manus vulnusque opemque tulit.

So a Soul that is under *spiritual Conviction*, his wound is deep, and not to be healed, but by the great skill of the heavenly Physician, and when it is healed, there are the tokens of it remaining in the Soul, that can never be worn out, so that the Soul may say, *Here are the marks and signs of my Conviction still in my soul.*

5. *Natural Convictions make the soul fly of God:* guilt works fear, and fear causes estrangedness; thus it was with *Adam*, when he saw his nakedness, he ran away, and hid himself from God. Gen. 3. 8.

Now spiritual Convictions drive not the Soul from God, but unto God; *Ephraim's* Conviction was spiritual, and he runs to God, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.* So that there is, you see, a great difference between *Conviction* and *Conviction*; between that which is natural, and that which is spiritual, that which is common, and that which is saving. Jer. 31. 3.

Yea such is the difference, that though a man hath never so much of the former, yet if he be without the latter, he is but *almost a* Chri-

Christian, and therefore we have great reason to enquire more after this *spiritual conviction*. For

1. *Spiritual conviction is an essential part of sound conversion*; Conversion begins here; true *conversion* begins in *convictions*, and true *convictions* end in *conversion*.

Till the Sinner be convinced of sin, he can never be converted from sin; Christ's coming was as a Saviour to die for sinners; and the Spirits coming is to convince us as sinners, that we may close with Christ as a Saviour; till sin be throughly discovered to us, interest in the blood of Christ cannot rightly be claimed by us; nay, so long as sin is unseen, Christ will be unsought. *They that be whole need not the Physitian, but they that are sick.* Mat. 9. 13.

2. *Slight and common convictions*, (when they are but skin-deep) *are the cause of much Hypocrisie*; slight Convictions may bring the Soul to clasp about Christ, but not to close with Christ; and this is the guise of an Hypocrite: I know no other rise and spring of Hypocrisie, like this of slight Convictions; This hath filled the Church of Christ with Hypocrites.

Nay, it is not only the spring of Hypocrisie, but it is also the spring of *Apostasie*: What was the cause that the *seed was said to wither away?* Mat. 13. 5, 6. It was because *it had no depthes of Earth*. Where there is through conviction; there is a *depth of Earth* in the Heart, and there the *seed of the word grows*; but where convictions are slight and common, there the seed withers for want of depth, so that you see clearly in this one instance, whence it is that many Mat. 13. 5, 6.

ny are but *almost Christians*, when they have gone so far in Religion, *viz.* for want of sound Convictions.

Secondly, And this hath a near relation to the former; *It is for want of a through work of Grace first wrought in the heart*; Where this is not, all a mans following profession comes to nothing; That Scholar is never like to read well, that will needs be in his *Grammar* before he is out of his *Primer*; Cloath that is not wrought well in the Loom, will never wear well, nor wear long, it will do little service; so that Christian that doth not come well off the Loom, that hath not a through work of Grace in his Heart, will never wear well, he will shrink in the wetting, and never do much service for God: It is not the pruning of a bad Tree will make it bring forth good fruit; but the Tree must be made *good*, before the fruit can be good, *Mat.* 12. 23.

Mat. 13. 20, 21.

He that takes up a profession of Religion with an unbroken Heart, will never serve Christ in that Profession with his whole heart.

If there be not a true change in that mans Heart, that yet goes far, and does much in the wayes of God, to be sure he will either die an Hypocrite or an Apostate.

Look, as in nature, if a man be not well born, but prove crooked or mishapen in the Birth, why he will be crooked as long as he lives; you may bolster or stuff out his Cloaths to conceal it, but the crookedness, the deformity remains still; you may hide it, but you cannot help it; it may be covered, but it cannot be cured.

So it is in this case; if a man come into a profession of Religion, but be not right born; if he be not *begotten of God*, and *born of the Spirit*; if there be not a through work of grace in his heart, all his profession of Religion will never mend him; He may be bolstered out by a life of duties, but he will be but an hypocrite at last, for want of a through work at first; a form of Godliness may cover his crookedness, but will never cure it. Joh. 3. 5.

A man can never be a true *Christian*, nor accepted of God, though in the highest profession of Religion, without a work of grace in the heart. For,

1. *There must be an answerableness in the frame of that mans heart (that would be accepted of God) to the duties done by him*; his spirit and affections within, must carry a proportion to his profession without: Prayer without faith, obedience to the Law given, without fear and holy reverence of the Law-giver, God abhorrs: Acts of *internal* Worship must answer the duties of *external* Worship.

Now where there is no grace wrought in the heart, there can never be any proportion or answerableness in the frame of that mans heart, to the duties done by him.

2. *Those duties that find acceptance with God, must be done in sincerity.* God doth not take our duties by tale, nor judge of us according to the *frequency of our performances*, but according to the sincerity of our hearts in the performance. It is this that commends both the doer, and the duty to God; with sincerity, God accepts the least we do,

without sincerity God rejects the most we
or *can do*: This is that temper of
which God highly delights in, *Prov.*
20. *They that are of a froward heart, an*
1 Chron. 29. 17. *abomination to the Lord, but such as are upri*
in the way, are his delight.

The Apostle gives it a great *Epithete*,
calls it in 2 *Cor.* 1. 12. εἰλικρινεία Θεῦ,
sincerity of God, that is, such a *sincerity*, a
his *special work upon the Soul*, setting
Heart right and upright before him in all
ways.

This is the *Crown of all our Graces*, a
the Commendation of all our *Duties*: Tho
sands perish, and go to Hell in the midst
all their performances and duties, meet
for want of a little sincerity of Heart
God.

Now where there is not a *change of na*
a *work of Grace* in the Heart, there
be no *sincerity to God-ward*; for this is
quid proveniens a naturâ, it is not an he
that grows in *Nature's Garden*: The *Hea*
of Man is naturally *deceitful, and desperat*
ly wicked, more opposite to *sincerity*, th
to any thing: As things corrupted ca
a greatter dissimilitude to what they were
Jer. 17. 9. than to any thing else which they neve
were.

God made man upright; now man volunta
rily losing this, is become more dislike t
himself than to any thing below himself
He is more like a Lyon, a Wolf, a Bea
a Serpent, a Toad, than to a man in Inno
cency.

So that it is impossible to find *sincerity*
any Soul till there be a Work of Grac
wrough

wrought there by the Spirit of God; and hence it is that a man is but *almost a Christian* when he hath done all.

The fourth Question.

4. *What is the reason that many go no farther in the profession of Religion, than to be almost Christians?*

1. *It is because they deceive themselves in the truth of their own condition*; They mistake their state, and think it good and safe, when it is bad and dangerous: A man may look upon himself as a member of Christ, and yet God may look upon him as a vessel of wrath; As a Child of God by looking more upon his sins than his graces, more upon his failings than his faith, more upon *indwelling lusts*, than *renewing grace*, may think his case very bad, when yet it is very good: *I am black*, saith the Spouse, *Cant.* 1. 5. and yet saith Christ, *O thou fairest among women*, ver. 8. So the sinner by looking more upon his duties than his sins, may think he sees his *name written in the book of life*, and yet be in the account of God a very Reprobate. Reason 1.

There is nothing more common, than for a man to *think himself something when he is nothing*, and so he *deceives himself*. Many a man blesses himself in his interest in Christ, when he is indeed a stranger to him; Many a man thinks his sin pardoned, when alas he is still in the *gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity*. Many a man thinks he hath grace, when he hath none: *There is* (saith Solomon) *that makes himself rich, and yet hath nothing*. This was the very temper of Laodicea; *Thou sayest I am rich, and encreased* Gal. 6. 2. Act. 8. 23. Prov. 3. 7.

with goods, and have need of nothing, and
Rev. 3. 17. *knowest not* (pray mind that) *that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

Thou knowest not;] as bad as she was, she thought her state *good*; As poor as she was in grace, she thought she was rich; *As miserable and naked as she was, yet she thought she had need of nothing.*

Now there are several rises or grounds of this mistake.

I'll name five to you.

First, *The desperate deceitfulness of the heart*
Supplantativum cor præ omni. *of every natural man*, Jer. 17. 9. *The heart is deceitful above all things*; The *Hebrew* is עקב חלב טכל; the word (עקב) is the same with *Jacobs* name; Now you know
Gen. 27. 36. he was a supplanter of his Brother *Esau*; he is rightly called *Jacob* (saith he) *for he hath supplanted me these two times.*

So the Word signifies, to be *fraudulent subtil, deceitful*, and *supplanting*. Thus is the heart of every natural man, עקב טכל *deceitful above all things.*

Psal. 52. 4. Mat. 13. 22. Prov. 31. 30. Job 6. 15. You read of the deceitfulness of the *Tongue.*

And of the deceitfulness of *Riches.*

And of the deceitfulness of *Beauty.*

And of the deceitfulness of *Friends.*

But yet the heart is deceitful above them all; Nay you read of the deceitfulness of Satan, yet truly a mans heart is a greater de-
Rev. 20. 3. ceiver than he; For he could never deceive a man, if his own heart did not deceive him.

Now it is from hence that a man presumes upon the goodness of his case, from the

the desperate treachery of his own heart.

How common is it for men to boast of the goodness of their hearts? *I thank God, though I do not make such a shew and pretence as some do, yet I have as good a heart as the best.* O do but hear *Solomon* in this case, *he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.* Prov. 28. 26. Will any wise man commit his money to the Cut-purse? Will he trust a cheat? It is a good Rule, μέμνησο ἀπιστεῖν, Remember to distrust; and it was *Austins* Prayer, *Domine libera me a meipso:* That man that trusts to his own heart, shall be sure to find himself deceived at last.

Secondly, This mistake arises from *the pride of a mans Spirit*; There is a proud heart in every natural man; There was much of this pride in *Adams* sin, and there is much of it in all *Adams* sons; It is a radical sin, and from hence arises this overweening opinion of a mans state and condition; *Solomon* saith, *Be not Righteous overmuch.* Eccl. 7. 15. *Austin* speaking occasionally of those words, saith, It is not *justitia sapiens*, but *superbia presumentis*; Not meant of the righteousness of the wise man, but of the *pride* of the presumptuous man. Now in this sense every carnal man is Righteous overmuch, though he hath none of that righteousness which commends him to God, *viz. the righteousness of Christ*, yet he hath too much of that *righteousness* which commends him to himself, and that is self righteousness. *Aug. Sent.* 365.

A proud man hath an eye to see his *beauty*, but not his *deformity*, his *parts*, but not his *spots*; *his seeming righteousness*, but not his *real wretchedness*.

It must be a work of grace that must shew a man the want of Grace. The haughty eye looks upward, but the humble eye looks downward; and therefore this is the Be-
Eph. 3. 8. lievers *Motto*; *The least of Saints, the great-*
1 Tim. 1. 1. *est of Sinners*, but the carnal mans Motto is,
Luk. 18. 11. *I thank God I am not as other men.*

Thirdly, *Many deceive themselves with common grace instead of saving, through that resemblance that is between them*; As many take counterfeit Money for currant Coyn, so do too many take common grace for true,
1Sam.21.14. *in similibus facilis est deceptio.* *Saul* took the Devil for *Samuel*, because he appeared in the Mantle of *Samuel*; So many take common grace for saving, because it is like saving grace; A man may be under a supernatural work, and yet fall short of a saving work; The first raiseth nature, the second only reneweth nature; Though every saving work of the spirit be supernatural, yet every supernatural work of the Spirit is not saving; And hence many deceive their own Souls, by taking a *supernatural work* for a *saving work*.

Fourthly, *Many mistake a profession of Religion for a work of conversion, and out-side reformation for a sure sign of inward regeneration.* If the out-side of the cup be washed, then they think all is clean, though it be never so foul within. This is the common *Rock* that so many Souls split upon, to their eternal hazard, taking up a form of *godliness, but denying the power thereof.*

2 Tim. 3. 5. Fifthly, *Want of a home application of the Law of God to the heart and conscience, to discover to a man the true state and condition he is in.* Where

Where this is wanting, a man will sit down short of a true *work of grace*, and will reckon his case *better than it is*. That is a notable passage which the Apostle hints concerning himself; *I was alive without the Law once, but when the Commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

Here you have an account of the *different apprehensions Paul* had of his condition *with* and *without the Word.* Rom. 7. 9.

1. Here is his apprehension of his condition without the word, *I was alive* (saith he) *without the Law*; *Paul* had the *Law*, for he was a *Pharisee*, and they had the *form of Knowledge, and of the truth of the Law*; Therefore when he saith, he was *without the Law*, you must not take him literally, but spiritually; he was without the power and effecacy of it upon his Heart and Conscience, convincing and awakening, and discovering sin; and so long as this was his case, he doubted not of his state, he was confident of the goodness of his condition; This he hinted when he saith, *I was alive*; but then, Phil. 3. 5,6. Rom. 2. 20.

2. Here is his apprehension of his condition with the Word, and that is quite contrary to what it was before; *When the Commandment came,* (saith he) *then sin revived, and I dyed.*

When the Word of the Lord came with power upon his Soul, when the Spirit of God set it home effectually upon his Conscience, that is meant by the coming of the *Commandment, then sin revived, and I dyed*, that is, I saw the desperateness of my case, and the filthiness of all my self-righteousness.

Then my hope ceased, and my confidence failed; and as before I thought my self alive, and my sin dead; so when God had awakened Conscience by the Word, then I saw my *sin alive and powerful*, and my *self dead and miserable*.

So that this is the first reason why men go no further in the profession of Religion, than to be *almost Christians*.

It is because they mistake their state, and think it good when it is not; which mistake is five-fold.

A deceitful Heart,

A proud Spirit,

Taking common Grace for saving.

Outward Reformation, for true Regeneration.

Want of home Application of the Law of God to the Heart and Conscience.

Reas. 2. *It is from Satans cunning, who if he cannot keep sinners in their open prophaneness, then he labours to perswade them to take up with a form of godliness:* If he cannot entice them on in their lusts, with a total neglect of Heaven, then he entices them to such a profession as is sure to fall short of Heaven. He will consent to the leaving some sin, so as we do but keep the rest; and to the doing some duties, so as we neglect the rest: Nay, rather than part with his interest in the Soul, he will yield far to our profession of Religion, and consent to any thing but our Conversion, and closing with Christ for Salvation; He cares not which way we come to Hell, so as he gets us but thither at last.

3. *It*

3. *It is from worldly and carnal policy;* *Reas.* 3.
This is a great hinderance to many; *Policy* many times enters *Caveats* against *Piety*; *Jehu* will not part with his *Calves*, lest he *hazards his Kingdom.*

Among many men there would be more zeal and honesty, were there less design and policy. There is an honest policy that helps Religion, but carnal policy hinders it.

We are commanded *to be wise as serpents,* Mat. 10. 16.
now *the Serpent is the subtilest of Creatures,* Gen. 3. 1.
but then we must be *innocent as doves*; If *Piety* be without *Policy*, it wants *security*; If *Policy* be without *Piety*, it wants *integrity*; *Piety without Policy is too simple to be safe, and Policy without Piety is too subtil to be good.*

Let men be as wise, as prudent, as subtil, as watchful as they will, but then let it be in the way of God, let it be joyned with holiness and integrity.

That is a curled wisdom that forbids a man to lanch any farther out in the depth of Religion, than he can see the Land, lest he be taken in a storm before he can make safe to shoar again.

4. *There is some lust espoused in the heart,* *Reas.* 4.
that hinders a hearty close with Christ; though they bid fair, yet they come not to God's terms; The *young man would have eternal* Mat. 19. 20.
Life, and he bid fair for it, a willing Obedience to every command but one; but only one; and will not God abate him one? Is he so severe? Will he not come down a little in his terms, when man rises so high? must man yield all? will God yield nothing?

No, my Brethren, he that underbids for Heaven, shall as surely lose it as he that will give nothing for it: He that will not give all he hath, *part with all for that Pearl of price,* shall as surely go without it, as he that never once cheapens it.

Mat. 13. 45, 46.

The not coming up to Gods terms, is the ruine of thousands of souls; nay, it is that upon which all that perish, do perish; A naked sinner, to a naked Christ, a bleeding broken *sinner*, to a bleeding broken *Christ*; these are Gods terms.

Most Professors are like Iron between two equal Loadstones; *God* draws, and they propend towards *God*; and the *World* draws, and they incline to the *World*; they are between both, they would not leave God for the World, if they might not be engaged to leave the World for God.

But if they must part with all, with every lust, every darling, every beloved sin, why then the spirit of *Demas* possesses them, and God is forsaken by them.

2 Tim. 4. 10.

My Brethren, this is the great reason why many that are come to be almost Christians, go no farther, some one beloved lust or other hinders them, and after a long and high Profession, parts them and Christ for ever; they did *run well*, but here it is that they give out, and after all fall short, and perish to Eternity.

Gal. 5. 8.

Thus having answered these four questions, *viz.*

1. *How far a man may go in the way to Heaven, and yet be but* almost a Christian.

2. *Whence it is that a man goeth so far as to be* almost a Christian.

3. *Whence*

3. *Whence it is that a man is but* almost *a Christian when he hath gone thus far.*

4. *What is the reason men go no farther in Religion, than to be* almost *Christians?*

I proceed now to the Application.

1. *That Salvation is not so easie a thing as it is imagined to be*; this is attested by our Lord Christ himself, *Mat.* 7. 14. *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it.* The *gate of Conversion is a very strait gate*, and yet every man that would be saved eternally must enter in at this *strait gate*, for Salvation is impossible without it. *Except a man be born again*, (ἄνωθεν, born from above) *he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* *Infer.* 1. John 3. 3.

Not that this Gate is strait simply, and in respect of it self; no, for converting Grace is free; the *gate of mercy stands open all the day long:* In the tenders of Gospel-grace none are excluded, unless they exclude themselves; *Christ* doth not say, *If such and such will come to me, I will not cast them out*; but, *Him that cometh unto me (be he who or what he will, if he hath a heart to close with me) I will in no wise cast him out*: He saith not, *If this or that man will, here is water of life for him*; but, *If any man will, let him take the water of life freely.* Christ grudgeth mercy to none: Though Salvation was dearly purchased for us, yet it is freely *proffered* us. Mat. 22. 3. 5. Acts 13. 46. John 6. 37. Rev. 22. 17.

So that the *Gate which leadeth to life*, is not strait on Christ's part, or in respect of its self, but it is strait in *respect* of us, because of our lusts and corruptions, which make the entrance difficult; a needles eye

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is big enough for a *thred* to pass through, but it is a strait passage for a cable Rope; either the *needles* eye must be enlarged, or the cable Rope must be untwisted, or the entrance is impossible. So it is in this case, the gate of Conversion is a very strait passage for a carnal corrupt sinner to go in at; the Soul can never pass through with any one lust beloved and espoused; and therefore the sinner must be untwisted from every lust; he must lay aside the love of every sin, or he can never enter in at this gate, for it is a strait gate. And when he is in at this strait gate, he meeteth with a narrow way to walk in; so our Lord Christ saith, *Narrow is the way that leadeth to life*, and what way is this, but the way of Sanctification? *For without holiness no man shall ever see the Lord.*

Heb. 12. 14.

Now this way of Sanctification is a very narrow way, for it lies over the neck of every lust, and in the exercise of every Grace, subduing the one, and improving the other, dying daily, and yet living daily, dying to sin, and living to God; this is the way of Sanctification: and oh how few are there that walk in this way! the broad way hath many Travellers in it, but this narrow way is like the ways of *Canaan*, in the days of *Shamgar*; It is said, Judg. 5. 6. *In the days of* Shamgar *the Son of* Anah, *the high ways were unoccupied, and the Travellers walked through by-ways*; In the *Hebrew* it is אורחות עקלקלות *through crooked ways*; the *way of holiness* is by the most an unoccupied way; so saith the Prophet, *Isa.* 35. 8, 9. *A way shall be there, and it shall be called*

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the way of holineſs, the unclean ſhall not paſs over it; no Lyon ſhall be there, nor any ravenous beaſt ſhall go up thereon; but the redeemed ſhall walk there; the unclean, and the Lyon, and the ravenous Beaſt, they are in the crooked wayes, none but the Redeemed of the Lord walk in the way of the Lord.

It is no wonder then, that our Lord Chriſt ſaith of life, that *few there be that find it*, whenas the *gate is ſtrait*, and the *way narrow* that leadeth to it: Many pretend to walk in the *narrow way*, but they never entred in at the *ſtrait gate*, and many pretend to have entred in at the *ſtrait gate*, but they walk not in the *narrow way*. *Ad cæleſte Regnum pauci deducuntur.*

It is a very common thing for a man to periſh upon a miſtake of his way, to go on in thoſe paths that take hold of Hell, and yet hope to find Heaven at laſt: Thoſe twenty parts fore mentioned run into deſtruction, and yet many chooſe them, and walk in them as the way of Salvation. As many profane and open ſinners periſh by chooſing the *way of death*, ſo many formal profeſſors periſh by *miſtaking the way of life*; This I gather from that our Lord Chriſt ſaith, *Few there be that find it*; which doth clearly imply what in *Luke* 13. 24. he doth plainly expreſs, *viz.* that many ſeek it; *many ſeek to enter in, and yet are not able*; many run far, and yet do not ſo run as to obtain; Many bid fair for the *Pearl of Price*, and yet go without it; Hell is had with eaſe, but the *Kingdom of Heaven ſuffers violence*, Mat. 11. 12. 1 Cor. 9. 24. *Facilis deſcenſus Averni; ſed revocare gradum; ſuperaſque evadere ad auras, Hic labor, hoc opus eſt.*

2. *If many go thus far in the way to Heaven, and yet miſcarry, Oh then what ſhall be* Infer. 2.

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the end of them who fall short of these! If he shall perish who is *almost a Christian*, what shall he do who is not *at all a Christian?* If he that owneth Christ, and professeth Christ, and leaveth many sins for Christ, may be damned notwithstanding; What then shall his doom be that disowneth Christ, and refuseth to part with one sin, one lust, one Oath for *Christ*, *nay*, that *openly* blasphemeth the precious name of *Christ!* If he that is *outwardly sanctified*, shall yet be eternally rejected, what will the case be of such as are *openly unsanctified*, that have not only the *plague of an hard heart* within, but also the *plague-sore of a profane life* without? If the *formal Professor* must be shut *out*, surely then the *filthy Adulterer*, *swinish Drunkard*, *the deep swearer*, *the profane Sabbath-breaker*, the *foul-mouth'd Scoffer*, yea and every *carnal Sinner much more*; If there be a *woe to him that falleth short of Heaven*, then how *sad is the woe to him who falls short of them that fall short of Heaven?* Ah that God would make this an awakening word to sinners that are asleep in sin, without the least *fear of Death*, or *dread of Damnation.*

Use of Examination.

Are there many in the World that are *almost*, and yet but *almost Christians?* why *then it is time for us to call our condition into question*, *and to make a more narrow scrutiny into the truth of our spiritual estate*, what it is, whether it be right or no; whether we are sound and sincere in our profession of Religion, or no. When our Lord Christ told his Disciples, *One of you shall betray me*, every one began presently to reflect upon himself;

himſelf; *Maſter is it I? Maſter is it I?* So ſhould we do, when we Lord diſcovers to us from his word, how many there are under the profeſſion of Religion, that are but almoſt Chriſtians, we ſhould ſtraight-way reflect upon our hearts, *Lord is it I?* Is my heart unſound? Am I but *almoſt a Chriſtian*? Am I one of them that ſhall miſcarry at laſt? Am I an hypocrite under a profeſſion of Religion? Have I a form of godlineſs without the power?

There are two *queſtions* of very great importance, which we ſhould every one of us often put to our ſelves?

What am I?

Where am I?

1. *What am I?* Am I a Child of God, or not? Am I ſincere in *Religion*, or am I only an hypocrite under a profeſſion?

2. *Where am I?* Am I yet in a natural ſtate, or a ſtate of grace? Am I yet in the old root, in old *Adam*, or am I in the root Chriſt Jeſus? Am I in the Covenant of Works that miniſters only wrath and death? Or am I in the Covenant of grace, that miniſters life and peace.

Indeed this is the firſt thing a man ſhould look at; There muſt be a change of ſtate, before there can be a change of heart; We muſt come under a change of Covenant, before we can be under a change of condition, for the *new Heart*, and the *new Spirit* is promiſed in the *new Covenant*? There is nothing of that to be heard of in the *old*, now a man muſt be under the *new Covenant*, before he can receive the bleſſing promiſed in the *new Covenant*: He muſt be in a *new Co-* Ezek. 36 36.

venant

venant-state, before he can receive a *new Covenant-heart*; No mercy, no pardon, no change, no conversion, no grace dispensed out of Covenant; therefore this should be our great enquiry, for if we know not *where* we are, we cannot know *what* we are; and if we know not what we are, we cannot be what we should be, *viz. altogether Christians*. Let me then, I beseech you, press this duty upon you that are *Professors*, try *your*
2 Cor. 13. 5. *own hearts, examine your selves whether you are in the faith, prove your own selves.* I urge this upon most cogent arguments.

1. *Because many rest in a notion of godliness, and outward shews of Religion, and yet*
Jam. 1. 22. *remain in their natural condition*; Many *are hearers of the Word*, but not *doers of it*, and so *deceive their own Souls*: Some neither *hear* nor *do*, these are *prophane sinners*; some both *hear* and *do*, these are *true believers*; some *hear*, but they do not *do*, these are *Hipocritical Professors*.

He that slights the Ordinances, cannot be a true Christian, but yet it is possible a man may own them, and profess them, and yet be no true Christian; Who would trust to a profession, that shall see *Judas* a Disciple, an Apostle, a Preacher of the Gospel, one that cast out Devils, to be cast out him-
Rom. 2. 28. self? *He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that Circumcision which is outward in the flesh; But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

2. *Because Errors in the first foundation are very dangerous*; If we be not right in the main,

main, in the fundamental work; If the Foundation be not laid in grace in the heart, all our following profeſſion comes to nothing; The *houſe* is *built* upon a *ſandy foundation*, and though it may *ſtand* for a *while*, yet *when the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon it, great will be the fall of it.* Mat. 7. 17.

3. *Becauſe many are the deceits that our Souls are liable to in this caſe*; There are *many* things like grace, that *are not grace*; now it is the likeneſs and ſimilitude of things that deceives, and makes one thing to be taken for another. *In ſimilibus facilis eſt deceptio.*

Many take *gifts* for *grace*, *common knowledge* for *ſaving knowledge*; when as a man may have great gifts, and yet no grace; great knowledge, and yet not know Jeſus Chriſt.

Some take *common faith* for *ſaving*; When as a man may believe all the truths of the Goſpel, all the promiſes, all the threatnings, all the articles of the Creed to be true, and yet periſh for want of ſaving faith.

Some take *morality* and *reſtraining grace*, for *Piety* and *renewing grace*: When as it is common to have ſin much reſtrained, where the heart is not renewed.

Some are deceived with a *half-work*, taking *conviction* for *converſion*, *reformation* for *regeneration*; we have many Mermaid Chriſtians;

Deſinit in piſcem mulier formoſa ſuperne.

Or like *Nebuchadnezzars* Image, head of Gold, and feet of Clay; The Devil cheats moſt men by a *Synecdoche*, putting a part for the whole; Partial Obedience to ſome commands, Dan. 2. 22, 23.

mands, for univerſal obedience to all. Endleſs are the deluſions that Satan faſtens upon Souls, for want of this ſelf-ſearch: It is neceſſary therefore that we try our ſtate, leaſt we take the ſhadow for the ſubſtance, and embrace a cloud inſtead of *Juno*.

Luk 2. 31. 4. *Satan will try us at one time or other*: Hee'l winnow us, and ſift us to the bottom; and if we now reſt in a groundleſs confidence, it will then end in a comfortleſs deſpair.

Nay God himſelf will ſearch and try us at the day of Judgment eſpecially, and who can abide that tryal, that never tries his own heart?

Gal. 6. 4. 5. *Whatſoever a mans ſtate be, whether he be altogether a Chriſtian or no, whether his Principle be ſound or no, yet it is good to examine his own heart*; If he find his heart good, his principles right and ſound, this will be matter of rejoycing; If he find his heart rotten, his principles falſe and unſound, the diſcovery is in order to a renewing; If a man have a diſeaſe upon him, and know it, he may ſend to the Phyſician in time, but what a ſad vexation will it be, not to ſee a diſeaſe till it be paſt cure? So for a man to be Graceleſs, and not ſee it till it be too late, to think himſelf a Chriſtian when he is not, and that he is in the right way to Heaven, when he is in the ready way to Hell, and yet not know it till a death-bed, or a judgement day confute his confidence; This is the moſt irrecoverable miſery.

Theſe are the grounds upon which I preſs this duty, of examining our ſtate, O that God would help us in the doing this neceſſary duty! You'l

You'l ſay, *But how ſhall I come to know whether I am almoſt, or altogether a Chriſtian?* If a man may go *ſo far*, and yet *miſcarry*, How ſhall I know when my foundation is right, when I am a *Chriſtian indeed.* Quest.

1. *The altogether Chriſtian cloſes with, and accepts of Chriſt upon Goſpel Terms.* True *Union* makes a *true Chriſtian*: Many cloſe with Chriſt, but it is upon their own terms, they take him, and own him, but not as God offers him. The terms upon which God in the Goſpel offers Chriſt, are, that we ſhall accept of a broken Chriſt with a *broken Heart*, and yet a whole Chriſt with the *whole Heart.* Answ.

A broken Chriſt with a *broken Heart*, as a witneſs of our *Humility*; a *whole Chriſt* with a *whole Heart*, as a witneſs of our *ſincerity*. A *broken Chriſt* reſpects his *ſuffering for ſin*; a *broken Heart* reſpects our *ſenſe of ſin*; a *whole Chriſt* includes *all his Offices*; a *whole Heart* includes *all our faculties*. Chriſt is a *King*, *Prieſt* and *Prophet*, and all as Mediator; without any one of *theſe Offices*, the *work of Salvation* could not have been *compleated*: As a Prieſt, he *redeems us*; as a Prophet, he *inſtructs us*; as a King, he *ſanctifies* and *ſaves us*: Therefore the Apoſtle ſays, *He is made to us of God, Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, Sanctification and Redemption*: Righteouſneſs and Redemption flow from him as a *Prieſt*, Wiſdom as a *Prophet*, Sanctification as a *King*.

Now many embrace Chriſt as a *Prieſt*, but yet they own him not as a *King* and *Prophet*; *they like to ſhare in his Righteouſneſs*,

neſs, but not to *partake* of his holineſs; they
Luk. 19. 27. would be redeemed by him, but they would not ſubmit to him; they would be ſaved by his blood, but not ſubmit to his power. Many love the priviledges of the Goſpel, but not the duties of the Goſpel. Now theſe are but almoſt Chriſtians notwithſtanding their cloſe with Chriſt, for it is upon their own terms, but not upon Gods. The Offices of Chriſt may be diſtinguiſhed, but they can never be divided.

But the true Chriſtian owns Chriſt in all his Offices; He doth not only cloſe with him as *Jeſus*, but as *Lord Jeſus*; he ſays with
Joh. 20. 28. *Thomas, My Lord, and my God.* He doth not only believe in the merit of his death, but alſo conforms to the manner of his life; as he believes in him, ſo he lives to him; He takes him for his wiſdom, as well as for his righteouſneſs, for his ſanctification as well as his redemption.

2. *The altogether Chriſtian hath a through work of grace and ſanctification wrought in the heart, as a ſpring of duties.* Regeneration *is a whole change, all old things are done*
2 Cor. 5. 12. *away, and all things become new:* It is a perfect work as to parts, though not as to degrees. Carnal men do duties, but they are from an unſanctified heart, and that ſpoils
Mat. 9. 16. all. A *new piece of cloth* never doth well *in an old garment*, for the *rent is but made worſe.* When a mans heart is throughly renewed by grace, the mind ſavingly enlightned, the *conſcience* throughly convinced, the will truly humbled and ſubdued, the affections ſpiritually raiſed and ſanctified, and when mind,

and

and will, and conſcience, and affections, all joyn iſſue to help on with the performance of the duties commanded; then is a man *altogether a Chriſtian.*

3. *He that is altogether a Chriſtian, looks to the manner, as well as to the matter of his duties*; Not only that they be done, but how they be done. He knows the Chriſtians priviledges lye in *Pronouns*, but his duty in *Adverbs*; it muſt not be only *bonum, good*, but it muſt be *bene*, that good muſt be rightly done.

Here the *almoſt Chriſtian* fails, he doth the ſame duties that others do for the matter, but he doth them not in the ſame manner; While he minds the ſubſtance, he regards not the circumſtance: If he pray, he regards not *faith* and *fervency* in Prayer; if he hear, he doth not mind Chriſts Rule, *Take heed how you hear*; if he obeys, he looks not to the frame of his heart in obeying, and therefore miſcarries in all he doth: *bonum oritur ex integra cauſa, malum ex quolibet defectu*; any of theſe defects ſpoil the good of every duty. Jam. 5. 16. Luk. 8. 18. Rom. 6. 17.

4. *The altogether Chriſtian is known by his ſincerity, in all his performances.* Whatever a man does in the duties of the Goſpel, he cannot be a Chriſtian without ſincerity. Now the *almoſt Chriſtian* fails in this, for though he doth much, prays much, hears much, obeys much, yet he is an hypocrite under all.

5. *He*

5, *He that is altogether a Christian, hath an answerableness within to the Law without.* There is a *connaturalness* between the *Word of God*, and the *Will of a Christian*; his Heart is (as it were) the *Transcript of the Law*; the same *Holiness* that is *commanded in the Word*, is *implanted in his Heart*, the same Conformity to Christ, that is enjoyned by the *Word of God*, is wrought in the Soul by the *Spirit of God*: The same *Obedience* which the *Word requireth of him*, the Lord enableth him to *perform*, by his *Grace bestowed on him*. This is that which is promised in the *New-covenant*; *I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their Hearts*, Jer. 31. 33. Now the writing his Law in us, is nothing else but his working that Grace and Holiness in us which the Law commandeth and requireth of us.

Heb. 9. 10. *and* 10. 16.

In the *Old Covenant Administration*, God wrote *his Laws* only upon *Tables of Stone*, but not upon the Heart; and therefore, though God wrote them, yet they broke them; but in the *New-covenant Administration*, God provides new Tables; *not Tables of Stone, but the fleshly Tables of the Heart*, and writes his Laws there, that there might be νόμος ἐγγεγραμμένος, a *Law within*, answerable to the *Law without*, and this every true Christian hath; so that he may say in his measure, as our Lord Christ did; *I delight to do thy Will, O my God, thy Law is within my heart.* Every Believer hath a *light within* him, not guiding him to despise and slight, but to prize and walk by the *light without* him; the *Word* commands him to *walk in the light*, and the *light* directs him to *walking according to the Word*.

2 Cor. 3. 3.

Psal 40. 8.

More-

Moreover, from this *impreſſion of the Law* upon the Heart, *Obedience* and *Conformity* to *God* becomes the *choice* and *delight* of the Soul; for Holineſs is the very *nature* of the *new Creature*; ſo that if there were *no Scripture*, *no Bible* to guide him, yet he would be *holy*, for he hath received *grace for grace*; Joh. 1. 16. there is a *grace* within to anſwer to the *word of Grace* without.

Now the *almoſt Chriſtian* is a ſtranger to this *Law of God* within, he may have ſome conformity to the Word in *outward Converſation*, but he cannot have this anſwerableneſs to the Word in *inward Conſtitution*.

6. *The altogether Chriſtian is much in Duty, and yet much above Duty: much in duty*, in regard of *Performances*; *much above duty*, in regard of *dependance*; *much in duty* by obeying, but *much above duty* by believing: He lives in his Obedience, but he doth not live upon his Obedience, but upon *Chriſt*, and his *Righteouſneſs*.

The *Almoſt Chriſtian fails in this*: He is much *in duty*, but not *above it*, but reſts *in it*; he works for *reſt*, and he reſts in his *works*; he cannot come to believe and obey too, if he believes, then he thinks there is no need of Obedience, and ſo caſts off that, if he be much in Obedience, then he caſts off Believing, and thinks there is no need of that: He cannot ſay with *David*, *I have hoped for thy Salvation, and done thy Commandments*. Pſal. 119. 166.

The more a man is *in duty*, and the more *above it*; the more in *doing*, and more in *believing*; the *more a Chriſtian*.

7. *He that is altogether a Chriſtian is uni-*

verſal

versal in his obedience; he doth not obey one command, and neglect another, do one duty, and cast off another; but he hath re-
Psal. 119. 6. spect to all the commands, he endeavours to leave every sin, and love every duty.

The *almost Christian* fails in this, his obedience is partial and piece-meal; if he obeys one command, he breaks another; the duties that least cross his lust, he is much in; but those that do, he lays aside.

Mat. 23. 23. The *Pharisees fasted, prayed, paid tithes,* &c. but they did not lay aside their *covetous-*
Mat. 3. 14. *ness*, their *oppression*, they *devoured Widows houses*, they were *unnatural to Parents*.

8. The *altogether Christian makes Gods glory the chief end of all his performances*; If he prays, or hears, or gives, or fasts, or repents, or obeys, *&c.* Gods glory is the main end of all: It is true, he may have somewhat else at the hither end of this work, but God is at the further end; As *Moses's Rod* swallowed up the *Magicians Rods*, so Gods Glory is the ultimate end that swallows up all his other ends. Now the *almost Christian* fails in this, his ends are corrupt and selfish; *God* may possibly be at the hither end of his work, but self is at the farther end, for he that was never truely cast out of himself, can have no higher end than himself.

Now then examine thy self by these characters, put the *question* to thy own soul, Dost thou close with *Christ* upon Gospel terms? is *grace* in the *heart* the principle of thy performances? dost thou look to the manner, as well as the matter of thy duties? dost thou do all in sincerity? is there an answerableness within, to the law without?

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art thou much above duty, when much in duty? Is thy obedience universal? Lastly, is Gods glory the end of all? If so, then art thou not only almost, but altogether a Christian.

Oh take heed of being almost, and yet but almost a Christian; it is a great complaint of God *against* Ephraim, *that he is a cake not turned*; that is, *half baked*, neither *raw* nor *roasted*, οὔτε ψυχρὸς οὔτε ζεστὸς, neither cold nor hot, as *Laodicea*, Rev. 3. 17. *Because thou art neither hot nor cold, therefore I will spue thee out of my mouth.* 2 Use of Caution. Hos. 7. 8. *Neque crudus, neque coctus.*

This is a condition that of all others is { *Greatly unprofitable.* / *Exceedingly uncomfortable.* / *Desperately dangerous.*

First, *It is greatly unprofitable to be but almost a Christian*, for failing in any one point, will ruine us as surely as if we had never made any attempts for Heaven. It is no advantage to the soul to be almost converted; For the little that we want, spoils the good of all our attainments: we say, as good never a whit as never the near; *Ad nihilum valet quod non valet ad finem suum*; there is no profit in leaving this or that sin, unless we leave all sin; *Herod* heard *John* gladly, and did many things, but he kept his *Herodias*, and that ruined him. *Judas* did many things, *prayed* much, preached much, professed much, but yet his *covetousness* spoiled all; one sin ruined the young man, that had kept all the commands but one. Thus he *that offends in one point, is guilty of all.* That is, that lives willingly and allowedly in any one sin, he brings the guilt of the violation of the whole Law of God upon his Soul, *Deus non vult cum exceptione coli.* Jam. 5. 10.

and that upon a two-fold account.

1. Because he manifests the same contempt of the authority of God, in the wilful breach of one, as of all.

2. By allowing himself in the breach of any one command, he shews he kept none in obedience and conscience to God, for he that hates sin as sin, hates all sin, and he that obeys the command as the express Will of God, obeys every command. And for this cause, the least sin willingly, and with allowance lived in, spoils the good of all our obedience, and lays the soul under the whole wrath of God. One leak in a ship may sink her, though she be tight every where else; *Gideon had seventy Sons, and but one Bastard*, and yet that one *Bastard destroyed all his Sons*; so may one sin spoil all our services, one lust beloved may spoil all our profession, as that one Bastard slew all the Sons of *Gideon*.

Jud. 8. 33, 31. comp. with c. 19. v. 5.

Secondly, *It is exceedingly uncomfortable*, as appears three ways.

1. *In that such a one is hated of God and Men*, the world hates him because of his *profession*, and God abhorrs him because of his *dissimulation*; the *World* hates him because he *seems good*, and God hates him because *he doth but seem so*. No person that God hates more than the *almost Christian*; *I would thou wert either cold or hot, either all a Christian*, or not *at all a Christian*.

Rev. 3. 15. v. 6. *Tepida evomere consuevimus unde ad vomitum ciendum quidam aqua tepida utuntur.* Drus.

Because thou art neither cold nor hot, therefore I will spew thee out of my mouth. What a loathsome expression doth God here use, to shew what an utter abhorrency there is in him against lukewarm Christians?

How

How uncomfortable then muſt that condition needs be, wherein a man is abhorred both of God and Man?

2. *It is uncomfortable in regard of ſufferings; for being almoſt a Chriſtian*, will bring us into ſuffering, but being but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, will never carry us through ſuffering. In *Mat.* 13. 20, 21. It is ſaid, *He that receiveth the ſeed into ſtony ground, the ſame is he that hears the word, and with joy receives it; yet hath he not root in himſelf, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or Perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the word, by and by he is offended.*

There are four things obſervable in the words.

1. That the ſtony ground may receive the word with joy.

2. That it may for ſome time abide in a Profeſſion of it; *he dureth for a while.*

3. That this Profeſſion will expoſe to ſuffering; for mark, *Perſecution* is ſaid to *ariſe becauſe of the word.*

4. This ſuffering will cauſe an apoſtatizing from Profeſſion, for that which is here called *offence*, is in *Luk.* 8. 13. called *falling away, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*

I gather hence, a Profeſſion may expoſe a man as much to ſuffering, as the Power of Godlineſs, but without the Power of Godlineſs there is no holding out in a Profeſſion under ſuffering. The World hates the ſhew of Godlineſs, and therefore perſecutes it; *The almoſt Chriſtian wants the ſubſtance, and therefore cannot hold out in it.*

Now this muſt needs be very uncomfor-

table; If I profeſs Religion, I am like to ſuffer; If I do but profeſs it, I am never like to endure.

3. *It is uncomfortable in regard of that deceit it lays our hopes under*; to be deceived of our hopes cauſeth ſorrow as well as ſhame: He that is but *almoſt a Chriſtian* hopes for Heaven, but unleſs he be *altogether a Chriſtian*, he ſhall never come there.

Now to periſh with hopes of Heaven, to go to Hell by the Gates of Glory, to come to the very door, and then be ſhut out, as the
Mat. 25. 10. five Virgins were, to die in the Wilderneſs, within the ſight of the promiſed Land, at the very brinks of *Jordan*, this muſt needs be ſad; to come within a ſtride of the Gole, and yet miſs it, to ſink within ſight of Harbour, oh how uncomfortable is this!

4. *As it is greatly unprofitable, and exceedingly uncomfortable to be but almoſt a Chriſtian, ſo it is deſperately dangerous:* For,

1. *This doth* obicem ponere, *it hinders the true work:* A man lies in a fairer capacity for Converſion, that lies in open enmity and Rebellion, than he that ſooths up himſelf in the formalities of Religion. This I gather from that Parable of the two Sons which our Lord Chriſt urged to the profeſſing *Scribes* and *Phariſies*, Mat. 21. 28.

Mat. 21. 28. to 32. *There was a man had two Sons, and he came to one, and ſaid, Go work to day in my Vineyard, he ſaid, I will not; but afterwards repented and went.*

And he came to the ſecond, and ſaid likewiſe, and he ſaid, *I go Sir, but went not.*

The firſt repreſents the carnal open ſinner, that is called by the Word, but refuſes, yet

yet afterwards repents, and believes. The ſecond repreſents the hypocritical Profeſſor, that pretends much, but performs little; Now mark how Chriſt applies this Parable, *ver.* 31. *Verily I ſay unto you, that the Publicans and the Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.*

And upon this account it is better not to be at all, than to be almoſt a Chriſtian, for the almoſt hinders the altogether. It is better (in this regard) to be a ſinner without a Profeſſion, than to be a Profeſſor without Converſion; for the one lies fairer for an inward change, when the other reſts in an outward. Our Lord Chriſt tells the *Scribe*, Mark 12. 34. *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*, yet never like to come there. None farther from the Kingdom of God, than ſuch as are not far from the Kingdom of God, As for inſtance, when there lies but one luſt, one ſin between a Soul and Chriſt, that Soul is not far from Chriſt; but now when the Soul reſts in this nearneſs to Chriſt, and yet will not part with that one Luſt for Chriſt, but thinks his condition ſecured, though that luſt be not ſubdued; who is farther from the Kingdom of God than he?

So our Lord Chriſt tells the young man, *Mar.* 20. 21. *One thing thou lackeſt*; why he was very near Heaven, near being a Chriſtian altogether, he was almoſt ſaved; he tells Chriſt he had kept all the Commands, *ver.* 20. He lacked but *one thing*, I ſay, but one thing; but it was a great thing; that one thing he lacked was more than all things he had, for it was the *one thing neceſſary*, it Luk. 10. 42

was a new heart; a work of Grace in his Soul: a change of state, a Heart weaned from the World; I, this was the one thing, and he that lacks this one thing, perishes with his all things else.

2. *This condition is so like a state of Grace, that the mistake of it for Grace, is easie and common*; and it is very dangerous to mistake any thing for Grace that is not Grace; for in that a man contents himself, as if it were Grace. Formality doth often dwell next door to Sincerity, and one Sign serves both, and so the House may be easily mistaken, and by that means a man may take up his lodging there, and never find the way out again.

What one saith of Wisdom, (*Multi ad sapientiam pervenissent, nisi se jam pervenisse putassent*; Many might have been wise, had they not thought themselves so, when they were otherwise) the same I may say of Grace; many a formal Professor might have been a sincere Believer, had he not mistook his Profession for Conversion, his Duties for Grace, and so rested in that for sincerity, that is but Hypocrisie.

3. *It is a degree of Blasphemy to pretend to grace, and yet have no grace.* I gather this from that, *Rev.* 2. 9. *I know the Blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not.* This place undergoes varieties of Constructions; *Grotius* and *Pareus* do not make their Blasphemy to lye in their saying, *they are Jews, and are not*, but to lye in the reproaches that these *Jews* fastned upon Christ, calling him *Impostor, Deceiver, one that hath a Devil*, &c.

Brightman goes another way, and saith, this

this was the Blasphemy of these *Jews*, they retained that way of Worship that was abrogated; and thrust upon God those old *Rites* and *Ceremonies* which Jesus Christ had abolished, *and nailed to his Cross*, by which they overthrew the glory of Christ, and denied his coming. Col. 2. 14.

But I conceive the blasphemy of these *Jews* to lie in this, that *they said they were Jews, and were not.* A *Jew* here is not to be taken literally and strictly only, for one of the lineage of *Abraham*, but it is to be taken *Metonymically*, for a true Believer, one of the spiritual seed of *Abraham*; *He is a Jew which is one inwardly*, so that for a man to say he is a *Jew* when he is not, to profess an interest in Christ when he hath none, to say he hath grace when he hath none, this Christ calls blasphemy.

But why should Christ call this blasphemy? This is hypocrisie, but how may it be said to be blasphemy? Why, he blasphemes the great attribute of Gods omniscience, he doth implicitly deny that God sees and knows our hearts and thoughts; For if a man did believe the omniscience of God, that he searches the heart, and sees, and knows all within, he would not dare to rest in a graceless profession of godliness; This therefore is blasphemy in the account of Christ. *Bellè pax ea deterior.*

4. *It is dangerous to be almost a Christian, in that this stills and serves to quiet Conscience.* Now it is very dangerous to quiet Conscience with any thing but the blood of Christ; it is bad being at peace, till Christ speaks peace: Nothing can truly pacifie Conscience, less than that which pacifies God, and that is the

blood of the Lord Chriſt. Now the almoſt Chriſtian quiets Conſcience, but not with the blood of Chriſt; It is not a peace flowing from Chriſts propitiation, but a peace riſing from a formal Profeſſion; not a peace of Chriſts giving, but a peace of his own making; He ſilences and bridles Conſcience with a form of Godlineſs, and ſo makes it give way to an undoing, Soul-deſtroying peace; He rocks it aſleep in the Cradle of duties, and then it is a thouſand to one it never awaketh more till death or judgment.

Ah my brethren, it is better to have Conſcience never quiet, than quieted any way but by *the blood of ſprinkling:* A good Conſcience unquiet, is the greateſt affliction to Saints, and an evil Conſcience quiet, is the greateſt judgment to ſinners.

5. *It is dangerous to be almoſt a Chriſtian, in reſpect of the unpardonable ſin:* The ſin that the Scripture ſaith, *can never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come;* Mat. 12. 32. I mean, *the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt:* Now ſuch are only capable of ſinning that ſin, as are but almoſt Chriſtians.

A true Believer cannot; the work of grace in his heart, *that ſeed of God abiding in him,* ſecures him againſt it, 1 *Joh.* 3. 9. compared with *Chap.* 5. 16, 17, 18.

The profane, ignorant, open ſinner cannot; though he lives daily and hourly in ſin, yet he cannot commit this ſin, for it muſt be from an enlightned mind; Every ſinner, under the *Goſpel* eſpecially, ſins ſadly againſt the Holy Ghoſt, againſt the ſtrivings and motions of the Spirit; He *reſiſts the Holy Ghoſt,* Acts 7. 51. *but yet this is* not the ſin *againſt the Holy Ghoſt.*

There

There muſt be three ingredients to make up that ſin.

1. It muſt be wilful, *Heb.* 10. 26. *If we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin.*

2. It muſt be againſt light and convictions, *after we have received the knowledge of the truth.*

3. It muſt be *deſtinata malitia*, in *reſolv'd malice*: Now you ſhall find all theſe ingredients in the ſin of the *Phariſees*, *Mat.* 12. 22. Chriſt *heals* one that was *poſſeſſed with a Devil*, a great work which all the people wondred at, *ver.* 23. But what ſay the *Phariſees?* ſee *ver.* 24. *This fellow caſteth out Devils by the Prince of Devils*; Now that this was *the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, is clear, for it was both wilful and malicious, and againſt clear convictions; They could not but ſee that he was the Son of God, and that this work was a peculiar work of the Spirit of God in him, and yet they ſay he wrought by the Devil; whereupon Chriſt charges them with this ſin *againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, *ver.* 31. 32, 33. Now the *Phariſees* were a ſort of great Profeſſors: whence I gather this concluſion, that it is the *Profeſſor* of Religion that is the ſubject of this ſin, not the open carnal ſinner, not the true believer, but the *formal Profeſſor*.

Blaſphemia in Spiritum Sanctum ea eſt qua quis deſtinata malitia contra proprium animi ſui ſenſum, Spiritus Sancti gratiam & virtutem, Dei; gloriam oppugnat, Luc. Brug. in Mat. 12.

Compare this with *Mar.* 3. 28. 29, 30.

Not the ſinner, for he hath neither *light* nor *grace*; Not the Believer, for he hath both *light* and *grace*, therefore the formal profeſſor, for he hath *light*, but no *grace*. Here then is the great danger of being *almoſt a Chriſtian*, he is liable to this dreadful unpardonable ſin.

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6. *This being but almoſt a Chriſtian, ſubjects us to Apoſtaſie*; He that gets no good by walking in the ways of God, will quickly leave them, and walk no more in them; this I gather from, *Hoſ.* 14. 9. *Who is wiſe, and he ſhall underſtand theſe things? prudent, and he ſhall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the juſt ſhall walk in them, but the tranſgreſſors ſhall fall therein.*

The juſt ſhall walk in them;] he whoſe heart is renewed and made right with God, he ſhall keep cloſe to God in his ways.

But the tranſgreſſor ſhall fall therein;] the word in the *Hebrew* is *peſhangim*, from a word that ſignifies to *prevaricate*: So that we may read the words thus, *The ways of the Lord are right, and the juſt ſhall walk in them, but he that prevaricates*, that is an Hypocrite in the *ways of God, he ſhall fall therein.*

פשעים

An unſound heart will never hold out long in the ways of God, *Joh.* 5. 35. *He was a burning and a ſhining light, and ye were willing for a ſeaſon to rejoyce in that light*

For a ſeaſon,] πρὸς ὥραν, for *an hour*, a ſhort ſpace, and then they left him: It is a notable queſtion *Job* puts concerning the Hypocrite, *Will he delight himſelf in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?*

Job. 27. 10.

He may do much, but theſe two things he cannot do.

He cannot make God his delight.

He cannot perſevere in duties at all times and in all conditions.

He will be an Apoſtate at laſt: The *ſeed of Hypocriſie* uſually breaks out in the *plague-ſore of Apoſtaſy*: Converſion-ground is ſtanding ground, it is *terra firma*, but a graceleſs

pro-

profeſſion of Religion is a ſlippery ground, and falling ground. *Julian* the Apoſtate, was firſt *Julian* the Profeſſor. I know it is poſſible a Believer may fall, but yet *he riſes again, the Everlaſting arms are underneath*; but when the Hypocrite falls, who ſhall help him up? Prov. 24.26. Deut. 33.27.

Solomon ſaith, *Wo to him that is alone when he falls*, that is, without *intereſt* in Chriſt; Why wo to him? *For he hath none to help him up.* If Jeſus Chriſt do not recover him, who can? *David* fell and was reſtored, for he had one to help him up; but *Judas* fell and periſhed, for he was alone. Eccl. 4. 10.

7. *This being but almoſt a Chriſtian, provokes God to bring dreadful ſpiritual judgements upon a man.*

Barrenneſs is a ſpiritual judgement: Now this provokes God to give us up to barrenneſs: When Chriſt found the Fig-tree that had leaves, but no fruit, he pronounces the curſe of *barrenneſs* upon it; *Never fruit grow on thee more:* And ſo *Ezek.* 47. 11. *The miry places thereof, and the marſh places thereof, ſhall not be healed, they ſhall be given to ſalt.* Mat. 21. 19.

A ſpirit of deluſion is a ſad judgment; why this is the *almoſt Chriſtians* judgment, that receives the truth, but not in the love of it; *Becauſe they received not the love of the truth that they might be ſaved; for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſions.* 2 Theſ. 2. 10, 11, 12.

To loſe either light, or ſight, either Ordinances, or Eyes, is a great ſpiritual judgment: why, this is the *almoſt Chriſtians* judgment: he that profits not under the means, provokes God to take away either light or ſight; Luk. 19. 42.

either

either the Ordinances from before his Eyes, or else to blind his eyes under the Ordinances.

To have a hard heart is a dreadful judgement, and there is no hypocrite but he hath a hard heart.

My Brethren, it is a dreadful thing for God to give a man up to spiritual Judgments.

Now this being almost a Christian provokes God to give a man up to spiritual judgements; surely therefore it is a very dangerous thing to be *almost a Christian*.

8. *Being almost and but almost Christians, will exceedingly aggravate our Damnation*; The higher a man rises under the means, the lower he falls if he miscarries; He that falls but a little short of Heaven, will fall deepest into Hell; He that hath been nearest to Conversion, being not Converted, shall have the deepest Damnation when he is Judged. *Capernaums* sentence shall exceed *Sodoms* for severity, because she exceeded *Sodom* in the enjoyment of mercy; She received more from God. She knew more of God, She professed more for God, and yet was not right with God, therefore she shall be punished more by God. The higher the rise, the greater the fall; The higher the profession, the lower the damnation; he miscarrieth with a light in his hand, he perisheth under many convictions, and convictions never end but in a sound conversion, as in all Saints, or in a sad damnation, as in all Hypocrites: praying ground, hearing ground, professing ground, and conviction ground, is, of all, the worst ground to perish upon.

Mat. 11. 23, 24.

Now

Now then to ſumm up all under this Head.

If to be almoſt a Chriſtian binders the true work of Converſion: If it be eaſily miſtaken for Converſion: If it be a degree of blaſphemy: If this be that which quiets Conſcience: If this ſubjects a man to commit the unpardonable ſin: If it lays us lyable to Apoſtacy: If it provokes God to give us up to ſpiritual Judgements: And if it be that which exceedingly aggravates our damnation: Sure then it is a very dangerous thing to be almoſt, and but almoſt a Chriſtian.

O labour to be altogether Chriſtians, to go farther than they who have gone fartheſt and yet fall ſhort; This is the great counſel of the Holy Ghoſt, *So run that ye may obtain*, 1 Cor. 9. 24. *Give diligence to make your Calling and Election ſure*, 2 Pet. 1. 10.

Need you any motives to quicken you up to this important duty?

Conſid. 1. 1. *This is that which is not only commanded by God, but that whereunto all the commands of God tend:* A perfect conformity of heart and life to God, is the ſumme and ſubſtance of all the commands both of the Old and New Teſtament. As the Harlot was for the *dividing of the Child*, ſo Satan is for dividing the heart. he would have our love and affections ſhared between Chriſt and our luſts, for he knows that Chriſt reckons we love him not at all, unleſs we love him above all. But God will have all or none. *My Son, give me thy heart*, Prov. 23. 26. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy Soul, with all thy might*, Deut. 6. 5. 2 King. 3. 16, 26.

Look into the Scripture, and ſee what that is upon which your *only* ſtands, and you Luk. 10. 27.

ſhall

ſhall find that God hath fixed it upon thoſe great duties which alone tend to the perfection of your ſtate as Chriſtians. God hath fixed your only upon Believing, *Mat.* 5. 36. *only believe.* God hath fixed your *only* upon obedience, *Mat.* 4. 10. *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.* Phil. 1. 27. *Only let your converſation be as becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt:* So that your *only* is fixed by God upon thoſe two great duties of *believing* and *obeying*, both which tend to the perfection of your ſtate as Chriſtians.

Now ſhall God command, and ſhall not we obey? Can there be higher motive to duty, than the Authority of the great God, whoſe will is the Eternal Rule of Righteouſneſs? O let us fear *God, and keep his Commandments*, for this is כל האדם the *totum hominis, the whole duty of man*; So we read it.

Conſid. 2. 2. *The Lord Chriſt is a Saviour throughout, a perfect and compleat Mediator*; He hath not ſhed his blood by halves, nor ſatisfied the Juſtice of God, and redeemed ſinners by halves; No, but he went through with his undertakings, he bore all our ſins, and ſhed all his blood, he dyed to the utmoſt, ſatisfied the Juſtice of God to the utmoſt, Redeemed ſinners to the utmoſt, and now that he is in Heaven, he intercedeth to the ut-
Heb. 7. 25. moſt, and is able to ſave to the utmoſt.

It is obſerved, that our Lord Chriſt when he was upon the Earth, in the days of his Fleſh, he wrought no *Semi-plenam curationem*, no half-cures, but whomſoever they brought to him for healing, he healed them through-

throughout, *Mat.* 14. 35, 36. *They brought unto him all that were diseased, and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his Garment, and as many as touched, were made perfectly whole.*

Oh what an excellent Physitian is here! none like him, he cureth, { *Infallibly.* *Suddenly.* *Perfectly.*

He cureth *infallibly*; none ever came to him for healing, that went without it; He never practised upon any that miscarryed under his hand.

He cureth *suddenly*; no sooner is his Garment touched, but his Patient is healed. *The Leper*, Mat 8. 3. is no sooner touched, but immediately cured; the two blind men, *Mat.* 20. are no sooner touched, but their eyes are immediately opened, *ver.* 34. Mar. 1. 31. & 2. 12. Luk. 8. 41.

He cureth *perfectly*; *As many as were touched, were made perfectly whole.* Mat. 14. 36.

Now all this was to shew what a Perfect and compleat Saviour Jesus Christ would be to all sinners that would but come to him. They should find healing in his blood, vertue in his righteousness, and pardon for all their Sins, whatever they were; Look as Christ healed all the diseases of all that came to him when he was *on earth*, so he pardons all the sins, and healeth all the wounds of all those Souls that come to him now he is in Heaven.

He is a Saviour throughout, and shall not we be Saints throughout? shall he be altogether a Redeemer, and shall not we be altogether Believers? oh what a shame is this!

3. *There is enough in Religion to engage us to be altogether Christians*, and that whether Consid. 3.

we

we respect profit or comfort, for Grace brings both.

First, *Religion is a gainful thing*; and this is *argumentum cogens*, a compelling Motive, that becomes effectual upon all. Gain is the *God* whom the World worships; what will not men do, what will they not suffer for gain? What Journeys do men take by Land, what Voyages by Sea, through hot and cold, through fair and foul, through storm and shine, through day and night, and all for gain.

Now there is no calling so gainful as this of Religion; It is the most profitable employment we can take up. *Godliness is profitable unto all things*, 1 Tim. 4. 1. It is μέγας πορισμὸς, a great Revenue; If it be closely followed, it brings in the greatest income; indeed some men are religious for the World's sake, such shall be sure not to gain; but they who are religious for Religion's sake, shall be sure not to lose, if Heaven and Earth can recompense them; for *Godliness hath the promise both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

Ah who would not be a Christian, when the gain of Godliness is so great! Many gain much in their worldly calling, but the profit which the true Believer hath from one hours Communion with God in Christ, weigheth down all the gain of the World: Cursed be that man who counts all the gain of the World worth one hours Communion with Jesus Christ, said that noble Marques *Galeacius Caracciola*. It is no where said in Scripture, Happy is the man that findeth Silver, and the man that getteth fine Gold: These are

of

of no weight in the Balance of the Sanctuary; but it is ſaid, *Happy is the man that findeth wiſdom, and the man that getteth underſtanding; for the Merchandize of it is better than the Merchandize of Silver, and the gain thereof than fine Gold.* Prov. 3. 13, 14.

By *Wiſdom* and *Underſtanding* here, we are to underſtand the *Grace of Chriſt*, and ſo the Spirit of God interpreteth it, *Job* 28. 18. *Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom. and to depart from evil is underſtanding.*

Now of all Merchants, he that trades in this *Wiſdom* and *Underſtanding*, will prove the richeſt man; one *grain of godlineſs* outweigheth all the *gold of Ophir:* There is no Riches like being *rich in grace*; For,

1. This is the *moſt neceſſary Riches*, other things are not ſo, *ſilver and gold are not ſo*; we may be, and be happy without them: There is but one thing neceſſary, and that is, *The Grace of Jeſus Chriſt* in the Heart, have this, and have all, want this, and want all.

2. *It is the moſt ſubſtantial gain*; the things of this World are more *ſhadow*, than *ſubſtance*; Pleaſure, Honour and Profit, comprehend all things in this World, and therefore are the carnal mans Trinity. Luk. 16. 11.

Ambitioſus honos, & opes, & fœda voluptas,
Hæc tria pro trino Numine mundus habet.

The Apoſtle *John* calls them, *the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life; this* (ſaith he) *is all that is in the World*; and truly if this be all, all is nothing, for what is pleaſure but but a dream and conceit? 1 Joh. 2. 19.

what

what is honour, but fancy and opinion? and what is profit, but a thing of nought? *Why wilt thou ſet thine eyes upon that which is not?* Prov. 23. 5. The things of the World have in them no ſolid ſubſiſtence, though fooliſh carnal men call them ſubſtance.

דאיכבי *Ad non exiſtens.*

But now grace is a ſubſtantial good, ſo our Lord Chriſt calls it, Prov. 9. 21. *That I may cauſe thoſe that love me to inherit ſubſtance,* להב חלישי *to inherit that which is.* Grace is a reality, other things are but ſhew and fancy.

3. *Godlineſs is the ſafeſt gain*; The Gain of Worldly things is always with difficulty, but ſeldom with ſafety: The Soul is often hazarded in the over-eager purſuit of worldly things; nay thouſands do pawn and loſe, and damn their precious Souls eternally for a little Silver and Gold, which are but the guts and garbage of the earth; *And what is a man profited to gain the whole World, if he loſt his own Soul?*

Mar. 6. 26.

But the gain of Godlineſs is ever with ſafety to the Soul, nay the Soul is loſt and undone without it, and not ſaved but by the attainment of it; a Soul without Grace is in a loſt and periſhing condition; the hazard of Eternity is never over with us, until the Grace of Chriſt Jeſus be ſought by us, and wrought in us.

1 Tim. 6. 1.

4. *Godlineſs is the ſureſt profit*; As it is ſafe, ſo it is ſure; Men make great ventures for the World, but all runs upon uncertainties; many venture much, and wait long, and yet find no return but diſappointment; they ſow much, and yet reap nothing.

But

But the *gain of godlineſs* is ſure, *Prov.* 11. 18. *To him that ſoweth righteouſneſs ſhall be a ſure reward.*

And as the things of this world are uncertain in the getting, ſo they are uncertain in the keeping.

Non minor eſt virtus quam quærere parta tueri.

If men do not undo us, Moths may; if robbery doth not, ruſt may; If ruſt doth not, fire may; to which all earthly treaſures are incident, as our Lord Chriſt teacheth us, *Mat.* 6. 19. *Solomon* limneth the world with wings, *Prov.* 23. 5. *Riches take themſelves wings, and fly as an Eagle towards Heaven.* A man may be rich as *Dives* to day, and yet poor as *Lazarus* to morrow: Oh how uncertain are all worldly things! *Habent non alas paſſerinas ſed aquilinas.*

But now the true treaſure of Grace in the heart, that can never be loſt: It is out of the reach both of ruſt and robber: *He that gets the World, gets a good he can never keep, but he that gets Grace, gets a good he ſhall never loſe.*

5. *The profit of Godlineſs lyeth not only in this world, but in the world to come:* All other profit lyeth in this World only, Riches and Honours, *&c.* are called this Worlds goods, but the Riches of Godlineſs is chiefly in the other Worlds goods, in the enjoyment of God and Jeſus Chriſt, and the Holy Spirit, among Saints and Angels in glory: Lo, this is the *gain of Godlineſs*; *ſuch honour have all his Saints.* 1 Tim. 4. 8. 1 Joh. 3. 17. Pſal. 149. 9.

6. *The*

6. *The gain of Godlineſs is a durable and eternal gain:* All this worlds goods are periſhing; periſhing *pleaſures*, periſhing *honours*, periſhing *profits*, periſhing *comforts*; *Riches are not for ever*, ſaith *Job*: *Haſt thou entred into the treaſures of the Snow? Gregory* upon theſe words obſerves, that earthly treaſures are treaſures of ſnow: What pains do Children take to ſcrape and roul the *Snow* together to make a *Snow-ball*, which is no ſooner done, but the heat of the Sun diſſolves it, and it comes to nothing? Why, the treaſures of worldly men, are but *treaſures of Snow*: When Death and Judgment come, they melt away, and come to nothing. *Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteouſneſs delivers from death*, Prov. 11. 4.

Job 38. 22.

You ſee here the great advantage of Godlineſs: So that if we look at profit, we ſhall find enough in *Religion* to engage us to be *altogether Chriſtians*. Or,

2. *If we look at comfort*, Religion is the moſt comfortable *Profeſſion*; there are no comforts to be compared to the comforts of *Grace* and *Godlineſs*.

1. *Worldly comfort is only outward*, it is but skin-deep; *In the midſt of laughter the heart is ſorrowful*, Prov. 14. 13. But now the *comfort* that flows from Godlineſs is an inward comfort, a ſpiritual joy; therefore it is called *gladneſs of heart*, Pſal. 4. 7. *Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart*: other *joy ſmooths the brow*, but this fills the breaſt.

2. *Worldly comfort hath a neather ſpring*; The ſpring of worldly comfort is in the creature, in ſome earthly enjoyment, and therefore

fore the comfort of worldly men muſt needs be mixed and muddy; *An unclean fountain cannot ſend forth pure water.* But ſpiritual comfort *hath an upper Spring*; the comfort that accompanies Godlineſs, flows from the manifeſtations of the love of God in Chriſt, from the workings of the bleſſed Spirit in the heart, which is firſt a *Counſellor*, and then a *Comforter*. And therefore the comforts of the Saints muſt needs be pure and unmixed comforts, for they flow from a pure Spring. Jam. 3. 11.

3. *Woldly comfort is very fading and tranſitory*; *The triumphing of the wicked is but ſhort, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment*: *Solomon* compares it to the crackling of thorns under a pot, *Eccl.* 7. 6. which is but a blaze, and ſoon out; ſo is the comfort of carnal hearts: but now the comfort of Godlineſs is a durable and abiding comfort, *your heart ſhall rejoyce, and your joy no man ſhall take from you.* Job 20. 5. Joh. 16. 22.

The comfort of Godlineſs is laſting, and everlaſting, it abides by us, *In Life.* *In Death.* *After Death.*

Firſt, *It abides by us in life*; *grace and peace* go together; Godlineſs brings forth *comfort* and *peace naturally*; *The effect of Righteouſneſs ſhall be peace*; It is ſaid of the primitive Chriſtians, *They walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghoſt*, Act. 9. 31. Every duty done in uprightneſs and ſincerity, reflects ſome comfort upon the Soul; *In keeping the commands there is great reward*, not only *for keeping* of them, but *in keeping* of them; as every *flower*, ſo every *duty* carries *ſweetneſs* and *refreſhing* with it. Phil. 1. 2. Col. 1. 2. Iſa. 32. 17. Pſal. 19. 11.

But who more dejected and diſconſolate than Object.

Saints

Saints and Believers, whose lives are more uncomfortable? whose mouths are more filled with complaints than theirs? If a condition of Godliness and Christianity, be a condition of so much comfort, then why are they thus?

Sol. That the people of God are often times
Isa. 50. 10. without comfort, that I grant; *They may walk in the dark, and have no light:* But this is none of the product of Godliness; Grace brings forth no such fruit as this, there is a three-fold rise and spring of it.

Sin within.
Desertion } without.
Temptation }

1. *Sin* within; The Saints of God are not all spirit and no flesh, all grace and no sin; they are made up of contrary Principles; there is light and darkness in the same mind, sin and grace in the same will, carnal and spiritual in the same affections; there is *the*
Gal. 5. 17. *flesh lusting against the spirit* in all these, and too oft, the Lord knows, is the Believer led away captive by these warring lusts; so was
Rom. 7. 23. the Holy Apostle himself, *I find then a Law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me*, Rom. 7. 21. *and* v. 23. *I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin*, and this was that which broke his spiritual peace, and filled his soul with trouble and complaints, as you see, v. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?*

So that it is sin that interrupts the peace of *Gods People*; indwelling lust stiring and breaking forth, must needs cause trouble and grief in the soul of a Believer; for it is as natural for sin to bring forth trouble, as it is for *grace* to bring

bring forth *peace*; every sin contracts a new guilt upon the soul, and guilt provokes *God*; and where there is a sense of guilt contracted, and *God* provoked, there can be no peace, no quiet in that soul, 'till Faith procures fresh sprinklings of the blood of Jesus Christ upon the conscience.

2. *Another spring of the Believers trouble and disconsolateness of spirit, is the desertions of God*; and this follows upon the *former*; *God* doth sometimes disappear, and hide himself from his people, *Verily thou art a God that hidest thy self*, Isa. 45. 15. But the cause of *Gods* hiding, is the Believers sinning: *Your Iniquities have seperated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you*, Isa. 59. 2. In Heaven where there is no sinning, there is no losing the light of Gods countenance for a moment; and if Saints here could serve God without corruption, they should enjoy God without *desertion*; but this *cannot* be; while we are in this state, remaining lusts will stir and break forth, and then *God* will hide his face; and this must needs be trouble: *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*, Psal. 30. 7. Psal. 13. 1.

The light of Gods countenance shining upon the soul, is the Christians Heaven on this side Heaven; and therefore it is no wonder if the hiding of his face be looked upon by the soul, as one of the dayes of Hell; so it was by *David*, *The sorrows of Death compassed me, the pains of Hell gat hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow.* Psal. 116. 3.

3. *A third spring of that trouble and complaint that brims the banks of the Christians spirit, is the temptations of Satan*, ὁ ἐχθρὸς, he is the great Mat. 13. 39.

great enemy of Saints, and he envieth the quiet and comfort that their hearts are filled with, when his conscience is brimmed with horror and terror; and therefore though he knows he cannot destroy their peace, yet he labours to disturb their peace. As the blessed Spirit of God is first a sanctifier, and then a comforter, working grace in order to peace; so this cursed spirit of Hell is first a *tempter*, and then a *troubler*; first perswading to act sin, and then accusing for sin; and this is his constant practice upon the spirits of Gods people; he cannot endure that they should live in the light of Gods countenance, when himself is *doom'd* to Eternal, intolerable darkness.

And thus you see whence it is that the people of God are often under trouble and complaint; all arises from these three springs of

Sin within,
Desertions } without.
Temptations }

If the Saints could serve God without sinning, and enjoy God without withdrawing, and resist Satan without yielding, they might enjoy peace and comfort without sorrowing; this must be endeavoured constantly here, but it will never be attained fully, but in heaven.

But yet so far as grace is the prevailing principle in the heart, and so far as the power of Godliness is exercised in the life, so far the condition of a Child of God is a condition of peace; for it is an undoubted truth, *that the fruit of righteousness shall be peace*: But suppose the people of God experience little

little of this comfort in this life; yet,

2. *They find it in the day of Death*; Grace and Holineſs will miniſter unto us then, and that miniſtration will be peace; a Believer hath a twofold ſpring of comfort, each one emptying it ſelf into his Soul in a dying ſeaſon; one is from above him, the other is from within him: the ſpring that runs comfort from above him, is the *blood of Chriſt ſprinkled upon the Conſcience*; the ſpring that runs comfort from within him, is the *ſincerity of his heart in Gods ſervice*; when we lie upon a death-bed, and can reflect upon our Principles and performances in the ſervice of God, and there find uprightneſs and ſincerity of Heart running through all, this muſt needs be comfort; it was ſo to *Hezekiah*, *Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect Heart, and have done that which is good in thy ſight*, Iſa. 38. 3.

Nothing maketh a Death-bed ſo uneaſie and hard as a life ſpent in the ſervice of ſin and luſt; nothing makes a Death-bed ſo ſoft and ſweet as a life ſpent in the ſervice of God and Chriſt. Or put the caſe the people of God ſhould not meet with this comfort then; yet,

3. *They ſhall be ſure to find it after death*; if *time* bring none of this fruit to ripeneſs, why yet eternity ſhall; *grace in time will be glory in eternity*, holineſs *now* will be happineſs *then*, *whatever it is a man ſoweth in* this world, *that he ſhall be ſure to reap in the* next world: *He that ſoweth to the fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption*; *but he that ſoweth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap life everlaſting*. When ſin ſhall end in ſorrow and miſery, holineſs ſhall end

Gal. 5. 7. Gal. 6. 8. Rom. 6. 23.

in joy and glory; *Well done, thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*, Mat. 25. 23. Whoever ſhareth in the *grace of Chriſt*, and conformeth to the life of Chriſt in this World, ſhall ſhare in the joyes of Chriſt in the World to come, and that joy is *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory*; lo, here is the fruit of Godlineſs; ſay now, if there be not enough in Religion, whether we reſpect profit or comfort, to engage us to be *Chriſtians throughout.*

1 Pet. 1. 18.

Conſid. 4. 4. *What an intire reſignation wicked men make of themſelves to their Luſts! and ſhall not we do ſo to the Lord Chriſt? they give up themſelves* without reſerve to the pleaſures of ſin, and ſhall we have our reſerves in the ſervice of God? they are altogether ſinners, and ſhall not we be *altogether Saints?* they *run, and faint not* in the ſervice of their luſts, and ſhall we *faint*, and *not run* in the ſervice of Chriſt? ſhall the ſervants of corruption have their ears bored to the door-poſts of ſin, in token of an intire and perpetual ſervice, and ſhall we not give up our ſelves to the Lord Chriſt, to be his for ever? ſhall others make a *Covenant with Hell and Death* and ſhall not we *joyn our ſelves to God in an everlaſting Covenant that cannot be forgotten? Acrius illi ad perniciem, quam nos ad ſalutem?* ſhall they take more pains to damn their Souls, than we do to ſave ours? and make more ſpeed to a place of vengeance, than we do to a *Crown of Righteouſneſs?*

Exod. 21. 6.

Iſa. 28. 15.

Jer. 50. 5.

2 Tim. 4. 8.

1 Which do you judge beſt, to be ſaved everaſtingly, or to periſh everlaſtingly? which

do

do you count the beſt Maſter, God, or the Devil? Chriſt or *your* luſts? I know you will determine it on Chriſts ſide; Oh then! when others ſerve their luſts with all their hearts, do *you* ſerve *Chriſt* with all *your hearts*; *if the hearts of the ſons of men be fully ſet in them to do evil*, then *much* more let the hearts of the ſons of God be fully ſet in them to do good. Eccl. 8. 5. Jer. 3. 5.

5. *If ye be not altogether Chriſtians, ye will never be able to appear with comfort before God, nor to ſtand in the judgment of the laſt and great day?* for this ſad *dilemma* will ſilence every Hypocrite; if my *commands* were not *holy*, *juſt*, and *good*, why didſt thou *own them?* if they were *holy*, *juſt*, and *good*, why doſt thou not obey them? If Jeſus Chriſt was not worth the having, why didſt thou profeſs him? if he was, then why didſt thou not cleave to him, and cloſe with him? If my *ordinances* were not appointed to convert and ſave ſouls, why didſt thou ſit under them, and reſt in the performance of them? Or if they were, then why didſt thou not ſubmit to the power of them? If Religion be not good, why doſt thou profeſs it? If it be *good*, why doſt thou not practiſe it? *Friend how cameſt thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?* if it was not a *wedding feaſt*, why didſt thou come at the invitation? if it was, then why didſt thou come without a *wedding garment?* Conſid. 5. Mat. 22. 12.

I would but ask an *hypocritical profeſſor* of the *Goſpel*, what he will anſwer in that day. Verily you deprive *your* ſelves of all poſſibility of *apology* in the day of the righteous *Judgment* of *God*; it is ſaid of the man that had no wedding garment on, that when

Chriſt came and examined him, *he was ſpeechleſs*; he that is *graceleſs* in a *day of grace*, will be *ſpeechleſs in a day of Judgment*; profeſſing Chriſt without a heart to cloſe with Chriſt, *will leave our Souls inexcuſable*, and make our Damnation *unavoidable* and *more intolerable*.

Mat. 11. 22. Theſe are the Motives to enforce the duty; and oh that God would *ſet them home* upon your *Hearts* and *Conſciences*, that you might not dare to reſt a *moment longer* in a *half-work*, or in being *Chriſtians within a little*, but that you might be *altogether Chriſtians?*

Queſt. *But you will ſay poſſibly, how ſhall I do? what means ſhall I uſe that I may attain to a through work in my Heart, that I may be not longer almoſt, but altogether a Chriſtian.*

Anſw. Now I ſhall lay down three rules of *direction* inſtead of many, to further and help you in this *important duty*, and ſo leave this work to Gods bleſſing.

Direct. 1. Firſt, *Break off all falſe peace of Conſcience*; this is the Devils *bond* to hold *the Soul* from ſeeking after *Chriſt*. As there is the *peace of God*, ſo there is the *peace of Satan*; but they are eaſily known, for they are as contrary as Heaven and Hell, as light and darkneſs.

The *peace of God* flows from a work of Grace in the Soul, and is the peace of a regenerate ſtate; but the *peace of Satan* is the peace of an unregenerate ſtate, it is the peace of Death; in the Grave *Job* ſaith there is peace; *there the wicked ceaſe from troubling*; ſo a Soul dead in ſin is full of peace, the wicked one troubleth him not.

The peace of God in the Soul is a peace flow-

flowing from removal of guilt, by justifying grace, *Rom.* 5. 1. *Being justified by faith in his blood, we have peace with God*; but the peace of *Satan* in the Soul, arises, and is maintained by a stupidness of Spirit, and insensibleness of guilt upon the conscience.

The peace of God is a peace *from sin*, that fortifies the heart against it; *The peace of God that passeth all mens understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*, Phil. 4. 7. The more of this peace there is in the soul, the more is the soul fortified against sin; but the peace of Satan is peace in sin: *The strong man armed keeps the house, and there is all at peace*, Luk. 11. 21. The *Saints peace* is *a peace* with *God*, but not with *sin*; the *sinners peace* is a *peace* with *sin*, but not with *God*; and this is a peace better broken than kept; it is a false, a dangerous, an undoing peace; my brethren, *death & judgment will break all peace of conscience*, but only that which is *wrought* by *Christ* in the *soul*, and is the *fruit* of the *blood* of *sprinkling*; *when he gives quietness, who can make trouble?* Job 34.29. *Now that peace that death will break*, why should you keep? who would be *fond* of that *quietness* which the flames of Hell will burn in sunder? and yet how many travel to hell through the fools Paradise of a false peace!

Oh break off this peace! for we can have no peace with God in Christ, whilst this *peace* remains in our hearts; *Intus existens prohibet alienum*. The *Lord Christ gives no peace* to them that will not seek it; and that man will never seek it, that does not see his need of it; and he that is at peace in his lusts, sees no need of the *peace of Christ*. The *sinner* must be *wounded for sin*, and *troubled under it*, before

Christ will *heal his wounds*, and give him peace from it.

Direct. 2. 2. *Labour after a through work of conviction*, every *conviction* will not do it: the *almost Christian* hath his *conviction*, as well as the *true Christian*, or else he had never gone so far; but they are not sound and right *convictions*, or else he had gone farther; God will have the *Soul* truly sensible of the *bitterness of sin*, before it shall taste the *sweetness of mercy*. The plow of conviction must go deep, and make deep furrows in the heart, before God will sow the precious seed of Grace and Comfort there, that so it may have depth of earth to grow in. This is the constnat method of God, First to shew man his sin, then his Saviour: First his danger, then his Redeemer: First, his wound, then his cure: First his own vileness, then Christs Righteousness. We must be brought to cry out, *unclean, unclean, to mourn for him whom we have pierced*, & then he sets open for us a *fountain to wash in for sin, and for uncleanness*, Zach. 12. 4. *ult.* verses, compared with *Zach.* 13. 1. That is a notable place, *Job* 33. 17, 28. *He looked upon men, and if any say, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, He will deliver his soul from going into the Pit, and his life shall see the light.* The sinner must see the unprofitableness of his unrighteousness, before he profits by Christs righteousness. The *Israelites* are first stung with the fiery Serpents, and then the brazen serpent is set up. *Ephraim* is first throughly convinced, and then Gods bowels of mercy work towards him. Thus it was with *Paul*, *Manasseh*, the *Jaylor*, *&c.* So that this is the *unchangeable* method of God in working grace, to begin with conviction of sin.

Num. 21. 6, 8.

Oh

Oh therefore *labour* for *through Conviction*; and there are three things we should especially be convinced of.

First, *Be convinced of the evil of sin*, the filthy and hainous nature of it; this is the greatest evil in the World; it wrongs God, it wounds Christ, it grieves the holy Spirit, it ruineth a precious Soul; all other evils are not to be named with this. My Brethren, though to do sin is the worst work, yet to see sin is the best sight; for sin discovered in its vileness, makes Christ to be desired in his fulness.

But above all, labour to be convinced of the mischief of an unsound heart; what an abhorring it is to God, what certain ruine it brings upon the Soul. Oh think often upon the Hypocrites Hell, *Mat.* 14. 15.

2. *Be convinced of the misery and desperate danger of a natural condition*; for till we see the plague of our Hearts, and the misery of our state by nature, we shall never be brought off our selves to seek help in another.

Thirdly, *Be convinced of the utter insufficiency and inability of any thing below Christ Jesus to minister relief to thy Soul in this case*: all things besides Jesus Christ are *Physitians of no value*; duties, performances, prayers, tears, self-righteousness, avail nothing in this case; they make us, like the troops of *Tema*, to return *ashamed at our disappointment* from such *failing brooks*. Job 13. 4. Job 6. 19, 20.

Alas! it is an infinite righteousness that must satisfie for us, for it is an infinite God that is offended by us. If ever thy sin be pardoned, it is infinite mercy that must pardon it; if ever thou be reconciled to God, it is infinite merit must do it; if ever thy heart

be changed, and thy ſtate renewed, it is infinite power muſt effect it; and if ever thy Soul eſcape Hell, and be ſaved at laſt, it is *infinite Grace* muſt ſave it.

In theſe three things right and ſound *Conviction* lyeth; and where-ever the Spirit of God worketh theſe through Convictions, it is in order to a true and ſound Converſion, for by this means the Soul is brought under a right qualification for the receiving of Chriſt.

You muſt know that a ſinner, *quatenus* a ſinner, can never come to Chriſt: for he is dead in ſin, in enmity againſt Chriſt, an enemy to God, and the Grace of God; but there are certain qualifications that come between the Souls dead ſtate in ſin, and the work of Converſion and cloſing with Chriſt, whereby the Soul is put into a capacity of receiving the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: For no man is brought immediately out of his dead ſtate, and made to believe in Jeſus Chriſt; there are *termini mediantes*, ſome qualifications coming in between; now ſound Convictions are the right qualifications for the ſinners receiving Chriſt; *for he came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance*; that is, ſuch as ſee themſelves ſinners, and thereby in a loſt condition; ſo *Luke* examples it, *The Son of man is come to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt; he is annointed, and ſent to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort all that mourn.*

See Norions *Orth. Evangel.* p. 130.

Mat. 9. 12, 13.

Luk. 9. 10. Iſa. 61. 1, 2.

Oh therefore, if you would be ſound Chriſtians, get ſound Convictions; ask thoſe that are believers indeed, and they will tell you had it not been for their Convictions, they had never ſought after Chriſt for ſanctification and ſalvation; they will tell you, they had periſhed.

Periſſem niſi periſſem.

ed, if they had not periſhed; they had been in *eternal bondage*, but for their *ſpiritual bondage*: had they not been loſt as to themſelves, they had been utterly loſt as to Chriſt.

Direct. 3. 3. *Never reſt in Convictions till they end in Converſion*; this is that wherein moſt men miſcarry, they reſt in their Convictions, and take them for converſion, as if ſin ſeen were therefore forgiven, or as if a ſight of the want of Grace, were the truth of the work of Grace.

That is a notable place in *Hoſ.* 13. 13. *Ephraim is an unwiſe Son, for he ſhould not ſtay long in the place of the breaking forth of Children.* The place of the breaking forth of Children is the Womb; as the Child comes out of the Womb, ſo is Converſion born out of the Womb of Conviction; now when the Child ſticks between the Womb and the World, it is dangerous, it hazards the life both of Mother and Child, ſo when a Sinner reſts in Conviction, and goes no farther, but ſticks *in the place of the breaking forth of Children*; this is very dangerous, and hazards the life of the Soul.

You that are at any time under *Convictions*, oh take heed of reſting in them, do not ſtay long in the place of the breaking forth of Children; though it is true, that Conviction is the firſt ſtep to Converſion, yet it is not Converſion; a man may carry his Convictions along with him into Hell.

What is that which troubleth poor creatures when they come to die, but this, I have not improved my Convictions; at ſuch a time I was convinced of ſin, but yet I went on in ſin in the face of my Convictions; in ſuch a Sermon I was convinced of ſuch a duty, but

I ſlighted the Conviction; I was convinced of my want of Chriſt, and of the readineſs of Chriſt to pardon and ſave, but alas I followed not the Conviction.

My *Brethren*, remember this, *ſlighted Convictions* are the worſt death-bed companions. There are two things eſpecially which above all others make a death-bed very uncomfortable.

1. *Purpoſes and Promiſes not performed.*
2. *Convictions ſlighted, and not improved.*

When a man takes up purpoſes to cloſe with Chriſt, and yet puts them not into execution; and when he is convinced of ſin and duty, and yet improves not his Convictions; oh this will ſting and wound at laſt.

Now therefore, hath the Spirit of the Lord been at work in your Souls? have you ever been convinced of the evil of ſin, of the miſery of a natural ſtate, of the inſufficiency of all things under Heaven to help, of the fulneſs and righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, of the neceſſity of reſting upon him for pardon and peace, for ſanctification and ſalvation? Have you ever been really convinced of theſe things? oh then as you love your own Souls, as ever you hope to be ſaved at laſt, and enjoy God for ever, improve theſe Convictions, and be ſure you reſt not in them till they riſe up to a through cloſe with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and ſo end in a ſound and perfect converſion. Thus ſhall you be not only *almoſt*, but *altogether a Chriſtian.*

F I N I S.

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